The Care and Feeding Of Your Dragon

or

The Autobiography of Craig Fletcher

Volume One

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The dragon was drawn by Mark C Stone (though you'd never know it by looking at his signature, which I insisted he include, just below the dragon)

Volume 1 and Volume 2 are essentially one book having been split into two to make printing easier.

The lab-cover artwork found in Volume 2 was produced by students at Polytechnic School in Pasadena, California over the forty-six years I taught there. Permission for use was happily given by everyone I could find.

My friend, Cathy Dees, was invaluable as a resource and sounding board.

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Leland Scott Publications
388 Virginia Ave
Pasadena, CA 91107
cfletcher@earthlink.net

A Note About the Dragon

It would be nice to be able to claim that the title of this little bit of amusement is directly related to what the East calls *the dragon fire*. This *dragon fire*, for those who don't know, is the name given to the *kundalini*, the energies that are said to awaken and snake up the spine of a spiritually evolved individual, activating and animating the chakric energy-centers as it provides the oomph required for the huge jumps in understanding that are associated with enlightenment. Caring for that divine fire, either consciously or unconsciously, is something every highly advanced, spiritually evolved individual does.

Unfortunately, that's not me. Indeed, it would have been a great title for a book if the kundalini *had* awakened in me, but it didn't (though I may have had glimpses).

So why the title?

The truth is that l have always thought that if I could have any kind of pet at all, I'd like to have a dragon.[1] There's just something about a guy walking down the road with his winged, long-necked, fire-breathing dragon, swapping jokes and generally cutting up as only a guy and his dragon can do, that has always seemed appealing.

What's interesting, though, is that in reality, I've never really been *without* a dragon in my life.

Dragons have always been given bad press. They carry off damsels in distress. They charbroil errant knights. They torch whole villages. Then, again, they are faithful to their creed, loyal to their kind, great protectors and they are affected by magic.

I'm a lot like that. I've carried off a respectable number of damsels in distress.[2] And with my fiery temper, I've scorched the occasional offending person, not to mention whole villages.[3]

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[1] Note that I wrote this long before "Game of Thrones."

[2] They've always consented, but I've still, often, managed to sweep them away in a very dragon-like manner.

[3] I didn't feel particularly comfortable with my life in high school—a situation I suspect is not uncommon for many—so when the school newspaper asked the graduating seniors to "will" something to an underclassman for the last edition of the paper, I wrote, "I *will* San Marino High School to all of the dirty little snobs that seem to run this place." Oh, what an

In short, my child-self—the part of me that is interested primarily in me—is a lot like a dragon. It has its good side. It has its bad side. This book, in essence, is about my dealings with my dragon, magic and all.

angry dragon was I, and how unamused was my mother (though I have to say for the record that it started out as a dare which, at least in my mind, was supposed to be a joke—so much for adolescent humor).

And as an additional note, I skipped my 10th high school reunion. It wasn't a snub, I just had other things going on in my life (you'll understand better in a few chapters). By the time my 20th reunion arrived, I still had things going on but decided to go anyway. It is good that I did it. What I found upon attending were all the people I had known in high school, except grown up. They weren't mean; they weren't assholes (for the most part); they were normal, decent folk. The experience was quite educational.

Preface

When I was twenty, I fancied myself a fairly intelligent, fairly logical, fairly together kind of guy. I wasn't a spectacularly good student, but as I was in the process of getting a degree in electrical engineering, I hardly considered myself outside the mainstream and I certainly didn't see myself as someone who could be swayed by hairbrained ideas. Having said that, if I had read *then* what you are about to read *now* I would have walked away thinking the author was either fully delusional or just plain full of shit. Although my physics students may believe they could make a case for either, I can assure you that I am neither.

Put a little differently, if you haven't been raised under the mantle of an Eastern tradition—and I'm not talking about the east coast of the United States, here—what you are about to read may seem . . . how should I put this . . . *unusual*.

Given that, what is important for you to know is that at every stage of my life, I have looked hard and long for inconsistencies and signs that the authenticity of the experiences I was having were bogus. With the full weight of my own personal introspection behind it, and with all the poking and nudging and questioning that my very intelligent, very precocious, very iconoclastic Eastern Philosophy students have put me through over the years, I have found no logical shortcomings in the views and happenings I am about to recount.

Coming at this from a still different angle, I had my dad read this autobiography back when I first wrote it. He and I were fairly close. Nevertheless, most of what he ran into in that reading was news to him. At the end of the session, he rather perceptively questioned, "How do you know what you've experienced is real?"

My answer was simple. *I don't.*

In fact, early on I realized that there was no way I would ever know *anything* in a definitive way.[1] My friend, Kay, and the people I later came

1 Interestingly, if the view I have spent most of my life animating is an accurate reflection of reality, this inability to know for sure is to be expected. I will say more about how reasonable *that* is in one of the *Musings* chapters toward the middle of the book.

into contact with through Kay—they could all have been frauds. The situation I ran into with my mom? It could have been some kind of neurological aberration. And the experiences I personally had along the way? They could all have been weird, psychological illusions.

I knew and acknowledged all of that.

But I also knew that I wasn't a numbskull. I had a good mind that was well trained and passably astute at detecting deceptions and inconsistencies. If I found either, I was not so attached to any of what I was doing that I couldn't change course.

In addition to that, I realized that if my experiences were moving me toward becoming a better person, it wouldn't *matter* whether I was right or wrong about the meaning of life. Nobody really knows what will happen when one dies in any case. If oblivion awaits, at least I wouldn't have raised a lot of dust leading up to that inevitability. And if oblivion doesn't await, that would be all the better.

In short, the direction I chose to go was nothing but good. I just hope it doesn't come across as so bizarre that you stop reading half-way through. After all, the book is supposed to be fun. In that, I hope it succeeds.

. . . And four more afterthoughts, two specifically for my students (I'm writing this additional note in 2019) and two for all readers. First, it dropped on me a few weeks ago that if I had died *twenty-five years ago*, my students would still have seen me as an unusual, kind-of fascinating human being. If you fall into that group, much of what you wondered about me back then will be cleared up in this book.

For my more recent students, on the other hand, you are in a completely different place. If I died today, you would have no idea that there had been a time when half the senior class regularly took an Eastern Philosophy activity I offered for the first twenty-five years of my time at Poly, or that during that time I was a known celibate, or that my lifestyle during that period very closely resembled that of a monk.

In other words, if you are someone who falls into that latter category, this autobiography is going to introduce you to someone *you never knew*, and that is going to be a trip . . .

The second thing I should probably point out is more of a suggestion than anything else. As you read this, try to keep in mind two things: Most of the book was written when the idea of global warming was not considered by the vast majority of the population to be the existential threat it is acknowledged to be today, and most of this writing took place long, long,

long before the time of Trump. In short, much of this bit of literature was written, quite literally, in a different era . . . [2]

Third, they say a lawyer who defends himself in court has a fool for a client. Well, a similar thought can be directed at writers who act as their own proof-reader. In fact, one of my friends (Cathy) *did* read this work about fifteen years ago, but since then a lot has changed. I didn't feel comfortable asking Cathy to re-read the book every few years because she had bigger and better things to do with her time. Given that I didn't want to give anyone outside my group access while I was still alive (nothing bad—you'll better understand once you get into it), I ended up having to proof-read for myself. I'm not a great proof-reader (I gave my students a half-point extra credit for every grammatical error they found in the physics text I wrote, and the first year they found 600 mistakes in the 1300-page tome; I did the same the second year and they found *an additional 600 goofs*—enough said about my proof-reading skills).

In short, if you find an additional *the* in the middle of a sentence, or if you stumble across a *thought* where a *though* should be, my apologies. I did my best.[3]

And lastly, there is a method to the organizational madness of this book. It is structured to provide information that will be needed in subsequent chapters. Skimming is fine, but if you are someone who likes to jump around when reading books, please don't. It will just confuse.

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[2] As contradictory as this is going to sound, this is not to say I won't be addressing the phenomena that is Trump, or that the book is dated. In fact, much of what I talk about is kind-of timeless. You will better understand once you get into it.

[3] Funny thing: Cathy was kind enough to proof-read the E.Phil book I wrote, and after she did I created an acknowledgement page. The ironic highlight of that section, aside from my thanking her for sweeping the book clean of typos, was the inadvertent inclusion of still one more typographical error.

Chapter 1

The Wonder Years
-Part 1-

I have been one of the physics teachers at Polytechnic School in Pasadena, California, for almost all of my professional life (in fact, for the first twenty-five years, give or take, I was the *only* physics teacher at Polytechnic School).[1] As I additionally presented a seniors-only activity in Eastern Philosophy during the first half of that tenure, a fair number of students during those early days found me pleasantly eccentric with a decent number asking outright if I would consider writing my autobiography. My stock response was that I would, but nobody could read it until *after I had died*.

When told this, one impish female student years ago said with a smile, "Die quickly!"

The first two chapters of this book consist of bits and pieces of remembrance I've had about my childhood up through high school, staccato style. As such, I don't think the quality of writing in those chapters is characteristic of the rest of the book (the *first* chapter is the most lacking). I find them interesting because each vignette elicits for me a whole train of thoughts about my younger years. As you won't have access to that train, I would suggest you skim those chapters if you choose to read them at all. It is not to say there aren't interesting tidbits here and there—the particularly well-endowed girlfriend I had in junior high school who was a year older than me and who offered, "I'll take off my clothes if you'll take off your clothes," for one; the nickname *sticky fingers* for another—but if you start and begin to feel decidedly unimpressed, please move on. It gets better.

The third and fourth chapters highlight my college years. These chapters are fun because they include stories of my life living in a fraternity house at Arizona State University in the late 1960's. I consider the prose and content in these chapters better than the first two, but if you are

1 At this point it's been 46 years with my having taught physics to just a little under half the 5400 Poly alums that are roaming the world today.

one of my old Eastern Philosophy students and are looking for the really good stuff, you still won't be there yet.

If anything, the first four chapters will convince you that I was a relatively normal guy up until the age of about 23. In the fifth chapter, you will get your first glimpse of the series of odd events that so completely turned me away from the path upon which I, when I was young, had somewhat mindlessly expected my life would take. Once you get through the first five chapters, you will either decide to use the book for kindling or keep reading until you drop. Of the two, I hope you choose the latter.

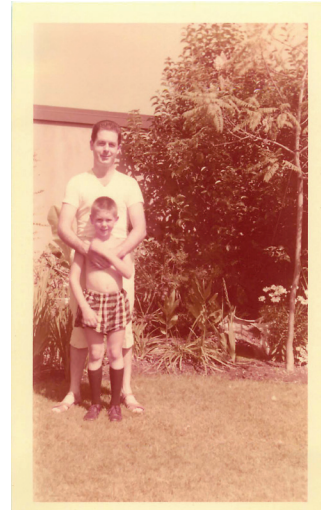
So in a nutshell, if you *don't* know me and are looking for something to read to burn a little time, start from the beginning in the knowledge that the happenings of the first four chapters are not indicative of the kinds of things you are going to run into over the rest of the book. If you *do* know me, on the other hand, you should find the first four chapters amusing but not what you are *really* looking for. That will all start in Chapter 5.

In any case, everything I have written about myself is true with nary a phrase generated by AI. Of that you may be certain.

Now, we begin. I was born Craig Leland Scott in Glendale, California on March 13, 1948 (this first picture is of me at the age of nine--notice the retainer--all the rest of the pictures are of my dad, my mom, and my dad and me). My mom divorced my dad a few years after I was born, so I don't remember them ever being together. My dad was a very nice man who I both liked and loved very much. I'm sure the divorce was hard on him because I know he dearly love her.[2]

[2] Much later in life, dad told me mom's story and what caused the divorce. It read like the script of a Hollywood melodrama.

During WWII, mom was deeply in love with a man who had joined the Army, as millions of young American men did at that time, and who was about to be shipped overseas. He had *leave* before departing, so he came by train to see mom and his parents. She met him at the train station. When she picked him up, she noticing he seemed down. As he had to depart later that afternoon, the day went by quickly. After he was gone, still later in the afternoon, she received a telegram from him (it was supposed have been delivered that morning). In it, he said he loved her and that if she felt the same, she should wear a blue ribbon in her hair when she picked him up at the station. Not having received the telegram, she wore no ribbon. He assumed she didn't love him (that was why he appeared to be "down"), and by the time the telegram arrived, he was long gone. Mom was devastated, feeling she had lost her one chance at true love.



I was oblivious to all of this when I was young. Truth be told, I was oblivious to *anything* that wasn't directly related to my own small self. It never struck me as unusual that my parents didn't live together. In fact, I was actually happy with the situation as it meant that I had two Christmases every year, one at home and one at my dad's house (ah, to be young and completely, totally self-absorbed!).

What is important to understand is that, no matter where I was during the holidays, my mom was the chief bringer-upper in my life.

Being married was kind of the norm in those days, so even though she was on the rebound, when she met my dad and he ultimately proposed, she said *yes* and they were married before he, himself, shipped out (he was an Ensign in the Navy). While he was gone she realized she didn't really love him, so when he returned she asked for a divorce (I assume I had been born by then, but I'm not sure). He countered saying they should really spend some time together to see if things might work out, which they did, but in the end they split up. Rebound relationships rarely work out. This one was no different.

Aside from alimony, my mom supported the two of us by working in what she called "show business." In fact, she was a part of an entertainment group called *The Hollywood Debs*. They sang and danced and did skits at places like the Cal Neva Lodge in Lake Tahoe.[3]

As a young kid, I wasn't particularly aware of what she was doing, but there would be occasions when we would go away for several weeks, always staying with a family that took care of me. I distantly remember spending one Christmas living on a farm out in the middle of nowhere, complete with snowy fields and a very old fashioned, party-line telephone mounted on the wall. On another trip, I spent part of a winter in snowy Springfield, Illinois. Mom found a family who had converted their attic into a cozy loft-style room, and I stayed with them while mom was working (I've ever since loved lofts). The place also had a great, huge basement—a very un-California feature.

Being in the snow in Springfield was quite a treat, and it really added to the Christmas spirit. I remember on Christmas eve sitting in the living room with the family, hearing sleigh bells coming from outside somewhere on the snow covered landscape and running to the window in the hopes of seeing Santa's sleigh. It was, of course, undoubtedly a car with bells on it, but you'd have never convinced me of that at the time.

I had a terrible crush on the teenage girl in the family. I wanted to let her know that I thought she was pretty neat, so I bashfully sidled up to her one night and, in front of the entire family, said, "I think you're a bitch."

It was something I'd heard at school. I thought it was a good thing. Who knew? She must have been a fairly emotional girl because her reaction was to burst into tears (remember, this was in the early 1950's—the idea that it was socially acceptable, at least for some modern-day clods, to call a woman a beatch was a good fifty years away).

Mom and I spent time at Lake Tahoe where the family I lived with gave me a real German Lugar pistol to play with. I'm fairly sure they had second thoughts about letting me have it because the Lugar disappeared shortly after my mom saw me with it. They didn't tell me they had liberated it, though, so I thought I'd lost it and was terrified they would find out and I'd be in trouble.

There was also a teenage boy in the family who had an electronics

[3] For a time they worked with Jimmy Durante, and a later iteration of the group worked with Bob Hope on a USO tour to entertain the troops during the Vietnam war.

workshop out in a shed in the back yard. He was a nice enough guy, but he really didn't want me— this pestering little kid—under foot and in his hair. He solved the problem in a clever way. He told me that the only way the shed door would unlock if he was inside and I approached from the outside, was if I said *please* to the door. Unfortunately, it wouldn't accept just *any* please, I had to say it just right. So I would spend ten minutes standing outside the door in the snow saying *please* in every imaginable way, trying to get into the electronic wonderland, until he would finally take pity on me and let me in. In hindsight, it must have been pretty funny to watch from a distance.

I also remember finding some matches in the house, going out to the side yard, lighting one, inadvertently dropping it onto a pile of pine needles and nearly starting a forest fire. It scared the daylights out of me, but it cured me of playing with matches.

When we were in Southern California, mom and I lived in an upstairs apartment in Hollywood. Although I can't remember who it was, it was evidently owned by someone mom knew who was big in show business.

I was pretty young at the time, but I was no less a delight for my mother (at least, according to her). For instance, she had a date one night with a gentleman who kept her out well after I had gone to bed. The next morning, he arrived at the crack of dawn with Bloody Marys. I awoke after he arrived and, coming out of my room all bleary eyed, was introduced to him.

The next night, Mom went to a party thrown by the same fellow. Not feeling particularly well, she left the party early. Because her date was the host and couldn't leave, a friend gave her a ride home. He came in for a few minutes to meet me, and when I saw him I asked, "Are you the man who is going to be here tomorrow morning?"

I had no idea the implications of what I had said. Mom was horrified.

I had other adventures at the apartment. A friend and I evidently went downstairs early one morning and broke every milk bottle we could find (this was back in the day when the milkman left milk and eggs at your door in the morning), then broke every egg that was left in the bargain. Mom could have shot me. I also remember playing in the open alley behind the apartment. Even today I have a soft spot for alleys.

It was also around that time that I discovered the wonder of pockets. I remember finding a bunch of rusty razor blades in a trash bin out in the al-

ley and putting them into my pocket to play with later. Mom was horrified.

I remember putting an ice cream cone in my pocket to enjoy later. Mom was horrified.

And then there was *dundadundadundabit*. Before I could talk (I've been told), I'd try to mimic sounds I'd hear. So mom takes me to see two of her girlfriends, and during the visit I start saying *dundadundadundabit*. Mom's friends are all atwitter, trying to figure out what I am saying, and mom is terrified they'll figure it out because she KNOWS what I'm trying to say. I'm quoting our next door neighbor who is always saying, "God damn son of a bitch." You know, *dundadundadundabit*!

As best I can tell, mom was horrified a lot.

During our stay in Hollywood, Mom bought, for the considerable sum of $100, my collie, Prince. Prince was a great friend and playmate when I was young, and a real handful in the bargain. When he was a puppy, he couldn't get it into his head that the green rug in the living room wasn't grass, so for several months mom had to put up barricades all over the place to keep him from pooping in the front room. He was a great friend and grew up to be quite a character.[4]

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[4] Once he grew out of his *pooping on the rug* stage, I taught him several "tricks." *Sit, stay, shake hands, lie down, roll over*, you know, the usual stuff. And with that training we would sometimes play a modified version of tag in the street (this could only be done on streets that had very little traffic, like the street our first home in San Marino was on).

The game would start with me having him *sit* in the middle of the road. I would then begin to walk away from him (backwards), gesturing and telling him to *stay* (which he would dutifully do). This would continue until I was, maybe, twenty feet away whereupon I would begin to *trot* backwards (all the while saying *stay*). When I was, maybe, fifty feet from him, I would turn and begin to run as fast as I could yelling *stay* over my shoulder as I went. He wouldn't move a muscle the entire time. Finally, when I was somewhere around a block away, I'd bellow, "OK, come on!" and with that he would take off like a shot. Even with me moving as fast as I could go, he would catch me in no time, absolutely ecstatic that we were playing together. He really was a fine fellow.

My ability to control him like that actually saved his life one day in the West Covina house. He had somehow gotten out and had crossed what was the very busy street that fronted our home. I realized he was gone so I went looking for him. When I went into the front yard, he saw me from across the street. He started to move toward me, stepping off the curb between two parked cars. Realizing that if he cleared those cars and moved out into the street proper, he would certainly be hit by a car I could see traveling his way at fairly high speed. Vehemently gesturing, and at the top of my lungs, I yelled, "STAY," then "SIT." He obeyed. I walked across the street and escorted him back where he belonged, but if he hadn't learned to follow my instruction, he would surely have continued out into the street and been hit by that car. I loved my dog. I was very grateful that didn't happen.

His willingness to obey commands from me unfortunately didn't extend to Stu (Stu was

When I was six, we moved from the apartment in Hollywood to a house in Hollywood. We must have stayed there for at least a year because I remember mom dropping me off at a school in the area (Buena Vista Elementary).[5] The house was one story, but it had a great back yard with a brick patio/barbecue area that was backed with a four-foot-high wall behind which was a huge woodpile. I remember making forts in the woodpile (fortunately, the black widow spiders never got me) and at one point managed to fall off the wall and land on my back (I walked on the wall all the time).

In another episode, I remember having a particularly exciting time with a mouse in the house. To understand what happened, you need to know the layout of the place (see sketch on next page).

Mom and I were in the kitchen one night when a mouse presented

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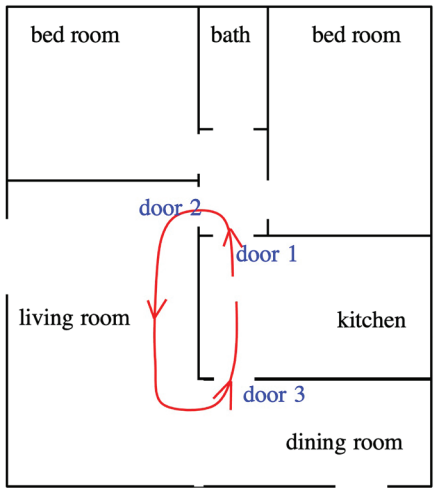
mom's second husband). One night while we were living in the second of the San Marino houses, Stu took him for a late-night, off-the-leash walk. About halfway through the outing, Prince took off after something that was up a driveway (the home was on a hill and had a long driveway through very thick vegetation). Stu said he could hear Prince barking, then heard "ki-yi, ki-yi, ki-yi." The idiot dog had chased a skunk and had managed to get sprayed square in the face.

I don't know if you've ever been around a dog with skunk on him, but the animal knows something is wrong and embarrassment ensues. To remedy the problem, I had to pick him up and place him into my bathtub so mom and I could scrub him down with tomato juice (the standard remedy at the time for skunk spray). It took the primary smell off his coat, but every time it would rain and he'd get wet you could detect what Stu called "ode to skunk." To say the least, the dog was considerably more circumspect thereafter when it came to chasing random wildlife.

Prince didn't really grow up with age. Years later, when we lived in lower San Marino, there were a couple of ducks owned by one of our up-the-street neighbors. The ducks would waddle around in the guy's fenced front yard. Our immediate neighbor had a front yard that was jungle-like, so we couldn't see beyond it up the street. One day when my mom and I were out in our own front yard, we heard a frantic QUACK, QUACK, QUACK, QUACK coming from the other side of the jungle. It was followed by a man's voice saying, ". . . AND STAY OUT!!! " With that, Prince came roaring around the corner in full flight. As soon as he saw Mom, he stopped cold, picked up one paw as though he had a sticker in it, and stood there looking very hurt and very pathetic. Mom went over to him, sympathetically checked his paw for a thorn, didn't find one, patted him on the head saying, "It's OK—you're a good boy," at which time he trotted away without a hint of a limp. He still knew how to play his people.

[5] It was at Buena Vista in the first grade that I built a large (12 inch long by 10 inch high), wooden Postal truck with big, very clunky pieces of wood. I painted it green, took it home and presented it to mom as a birthday gift. She carried that monstrosity around with her for the rest of her life. I'd help her move from one home to another, and there'd be that truck, taking up space, being a nuisance. No matter how much I teased her about it, it was something I made for her and she wasn't going to give it up for anything.



itself from underneath the sink. It was frightened and moving in my direction. I, being not-so-bright, thought it was after me so I took off running.

I darted through *door 1* and *door 2* with the mouse hot on my trail. Again, I thought it was after me, but in fact it was running from Prince, my dog, who saw me take off, thought I was playing and was chasing *me*.

I ran through *door 3* and back into the kitchen after having completed my first circuit, and started my second circuit with mom laughing hysterically, watching me running with a mouse on my tail and Prince on its tail. As I passed through *door 2* into the living room, hoping to stop the mouse, I slammed the door behind me as I went through. That didn't stop the mouse—it went right under the closed door—but the poor, unsuspecting dog came barreling around the corner and crashed right into it. Fortunately, the floors were hardwood, he wasn't getting much traction around the corners and wasn't moving very fast, so the collision didn't hurt anything but his dignity. I heard the BANG, though, as the door and the dog became one. Realizing what had happened, I ran through the living room and entered the kitchen one more time, giggling to beat all.

Once in the kitchen for the second time, I hopping onto a stool, the mouse made it for the rear of the refrigerator and Prince, well, he still wanted to play.

Mom and I sat in the kitchen and laugh and laugh and laugh.

It was in this neighborhood that I had my first chance to ride a three-speed bike. Such bikes were considered new-fangled at the time, and this one belonged to a neighborhood kid. Problem was, I'd never used hand breaks, so when I got to the end of the cul-de-sac and it was time to stop, I froze and ran the bike straight into a curb.

The kid wasn't very happy, but upon impact I flew forward with my crotch hitting the handlebar support and, frankly, couldn't at the time have cared less what the kid was thinking.

Lastly, that street was quite cool because at its end was an old-fashion, sand and gravel *wash*. I played a lot in that wash!

It was while we were living in that house that my mom met Stuart Fletcher. Stu was an architect/designer who worked in San Marino, California. I don't know how they met, but he courted Mom for about a year. He taught me how to catch and throw a football, and one night after dinner he sat me down and asked if he could marry my mom. I said, "Sure," and so began the next phase of my early life.

After getting married, Mom, Stu and I moved into a tiny, tiny rental house in Covina[6] that backed up against another great, natural wash! (In fact, we had to move from the Hollywood house because the State of California pulled an eminent-domain and *took* that house--the Hollywood Freeway now runs right through the property.)

Within a month of our arrival, they began building the May Company Department Store in the huge open space across the street from us. The dust generated by the earth-moving machines was everywhere. I was in the first grade and thought the place was just fine, but within a few months Mom and Stu bought a house in a new tract of homes in West Covina, and we moved there.[7]

Being an architect, one of the things Stu liked to do was to tinker with his living quarters. Whenever we'd move, he would always do some architectural thing to the property. In West Covina, he added a room with fireplace to the front of the house and landscaped the back yard complete with rock garden and a nice little tomato garden. In fact, I can remember plucking huge, green, tomato bugs off the tomato plants and throwing them against the back redwood fence. We had one whole section of the fence that was green. It wasn't a very pleasant thing to do to the bugs, but I was just following my stepdad's lead. The tomato bugs were eating our tomato plants, and we needed to protect them.

I also remember Stu faking me out into believing that weeding the front ivy was fun. Really big weeds were considered majors, colonels or

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6 Funny story: At one point while we were there, Stu bought three steaks he intended to cook on the outside barbecue. Leaving them unattended on a table attached to the barbecue while he went inside for barbecue sauce, Prince managed to get about half of them eaten before Stu returned. Stu was not amused . . .

7 I went back to look at the West Covina house thirty years ago. The area had turned into quite a slum, but when we were there everything was shiny and new.

generals, depending on their size, and the trick was to deplete the enemy of its commanders. The two of us would get out there and weed like mad, each trying to outdo the other. It was definitely shades of Tom Sawyer. I also remember watching the Mickey Mouse club on TV there and wanting to become a Mouseketeer (my mother didn't say no, but she did ask if I knew how to sing and dance, which pretty much put an end to the fantasy).

Ben Loman Elementary School was quite literally five houses down the street from my home, so I walked to school every day. I was halfway through the second grade when we moved in. School was still fun, though mainly because it gave me a forum in which to play.

Although I didn't realize it at the time, and although it wouldn't have made much difference to me even if I had realized it, it is obvious in looking back that I was pretty much *the* athletic talent in my class. I was the only student who was almost never hit while playing dodge ball, even when the circle was using two balls, and I was a terror at tetherball.

I had a lot of friends including one tough kid from New York named Dale who was a year ahead of me. He had flaming red hair and quite a temper, but we got along well and played a lot together.

Covina at the time was orange groves, open fields, a few already established tract-house complexes and lots of new construction. My summer days were spent either going to the elementary school to do crafts, play caroms, make homemade ice cream, eat watermelon and do sports, or riding my bicycle with Dale and friends through the hilly, wide open spaces of Covina. I also played war with my buddies in the fields[8] and crashed around in partially completed homes.[9] [10]

Being a kid in the 1950's was very cool. My mom had no worries at all about pushing me out the door in the morning and not seeing me until

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[8] We would dig foxholes and throw dirt clods at each other.

[9] This was my first experience with mercury, assuming you don't include the time I bit the end off of a thermometer as a first-grader and had to eat a can of spinach every day for a month. A friend inadvertently broke a thermostat in one of the partially finished houses. We had a wild time playing with the elusive little silver droplets. And no, (students of mine), the mercury contact did not make me any more demented than I already was . . .

[10] One of the fun things about the area was that it had been *orange groves* before the housing market arrived, and where that is the case, one is pretty sure to find loads of lizards running about. I remember my astonishment when I tried to catch my first lizard by grabbing its tail. If you've never done this and don't know, the tail comes off as soon as you tug on it (it is part of the lizard's survival mechanism). It really freaked me out when I grabbed that first tail and it ended up in my hand, flipping to and fro sans the lizard.

lunch, then pushing me out the door after lunch and not seeing me again until dinner. I'd usually let her know where I was going and what I was doing, but the streets were safe. It was a completely different environment than now. It was really fun being a kid with time to burn.

While at Ben Loman, my third-grade teacher was not so lovingly nicknamed *Mrs. Crabapple*. I learned later that the poor thing had lost her husband and hadn't taken it well, but at the time I didn't know that. What I did know was that she was short tempered and an absolute tyrant when it came to her students. I occasionally flummoxed her, though. One day I remember her asking if anyone wanted to go to the office. I thought she needed a messenger, so I put my hand up. In fact, she was really threatening the class because we were being too noisy. She didn't really know what to do with that, but I backed down fast when I realized my error.

It was in her class that I got a tremendous shot of humiliation and self-consciousness, especially when it came to learning to read. I went from the *good readers* group to the *dumb-dumb* group in about a week. Almost everyone has learning disabilities of some sort, but mine coupled with her approach brought me to a standstill. She was scary, at least to a seven-year-old.

Also, that was the year in which I experienced my first real crush (not including that brief infatuation in Illinois when I was, like, five). Her name was Cathy, she was of Scottish descent, she was cute and she wore knee high socks to school. I thought she was wonderful. In fact, I remember riding my bike to her house to see her. She was there with a friend. As we sat outside in her front garden, I remember her whispering to her friend who proceeded to turn to me and say, *she wants you to kiss her*.

I was in love, but there was no way I was going to kiss a girl, especially in front of her friend. I declined, and that was the end of it.

As I said, Stu was an architect and builder and was based in San Marino. Just before I started my fourth-grade year, Mom and Stu decided to move there. I don't remember exactly what the timetable was, but I do remember Stu driving me from Covina to *K.L. Carver Elementary School* in the San Marino School District every day on his way to work. Finally, about a month into the school year, we moved into a nice little house in the most south-easterly part of town.[11]

[11] I even remember the address, 2935 Somersett Place . . . and there is one more thing that I think is interesting that I should have pointed out earlier. Every time my mom, Stu and I

There were two bike related memories that were interesting and that had to do with our new home, though the first one was characteristic of my bike riding style even when I was in Covina.

First, as a nine-year-old, I would ride my one-speed bicycle about a mile up San Gabriel Blvd (or Roses Rd, which sort of paralleled San Gabriel Blvd—both were uphill) directly to K.L. Carver every school day and most week-days during the summer. In and of itself, that wasn't so remarkable (aside from the fact that it was perfectly safe at the time to let a kid ride a bike *anywhere* without adult supervision). What was interesting was what that exercise apparently did for me.

By the time I got to high school (and, probably, when I was in junior high, though I don't remember this being the case), I had thighs that were freakishly large. Aside from the fact that my mom had complained for years about her inability to find pants that fit both my waste and my thighs (there was one brand and one brand alone that seemed to work), it wasn't until the summer between my freshman and sophomore year that this really struck home.

I was in summer school—Spanish class. I was wearing relatively short shorts (the style). I was sleepy and a little stiff, so I stretched, tensing my exposed, bare legs in the process. As I did, I sort of turned to look out the door and saw a senior girl sitting a row over and a few seats back who almost fell out of her chair as she looked at my flexed, muscular legs.

This was quite heady stuff, to think that I could distract any female, much less a senior, with anything having to do with my body. Sure, I was a jock, but I didn't really look like a jock. I had narrow shoulders and not much upper body strength as nobody did weight training when I was a kid, so this was quite phenomenal.

I'm mentioning this for a reason, though. I think those thighs came as the consequence of my riding my bike when young, and specifically riding my bike up moderately steep hills (not to mention very steep hills--check out the *Lacy Park*-end of Shenandoah Rd in San Marino if you ever get the chance) without compromise. I never got off my bike to walk a steep hill, and I certainly never reverted to changing gears as my bike at the time was a one-speed. I'm also pretty sure this had a lot to do with why I was

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moved into a new house, we would go to the house the night before moving in, sit on the floor in the middle of the empty living room, light a candle and have a toast (mine being non-alcoholic, of course) to our new adventure. I don't know whose idea it was originally, but in looking back it seems like a very nice tradition.

so quick on my feet as an athlete.[12]

The other thing I remember about the bike ride was my reaction to riding in smog. Smog in the Los Angeles area came into its own in the mid 1950's, which is around the time I was riding my bike up and down San Gabriel Blvd every day. It wasn't bad in the morning, but I can't tell you how many days during late spring and into the summer when I'd be flying on my bike down San Gabriel Blvd on my way home from Carver with my eyes burning and tears streaming over my cheeks due to the smog. (Legislation to get rid of smog has been a boon to our youth, but they have no idea because they never experienced the way it was before.)

New topic: In a lot of ways, I had a very nice childhood. It was not without its travails, though. The one I'm about to talk about is going to sound horrendous, which it was at the time, but for reasons I will talk about much later it was something that turned out to be very useful for me in the long run. Additionally, I don't think the experience's basis was as superficially obvious as it is going to seem in my presentation below, but I'll talk more about that later, too.

It was during the time interval between my years in Covina and my first two or three years in San Marino that my mom decided that I couldn't be trusted to tell the truth. In her defense, Mom was intelligent and pragmatic. Almost all of the reasons that led her to believe this seemed reasonable to her at the time. The problem was that life (karma, whatever) was, shall we say, conspiring to shape events so that what *was* the case didn't look *like* the case.

The preamble to this was an incident that happened all the way back in first grade when we were living in the rented house across the street from the May Company in Covina. I was playing up the street, maybe six houses away, with one of my friends. Mom came out on the sidewalk and called me in for dinner. I didn't hear her. As she was calling, she believed she saw me look in her direction only to then look away and keep playing.[13] As a consequence, she was seriously pissed. She turned on her heels and went back into the house leaving me to do whatever I damn well

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[12] Interestingly, once I got out of college and stopped playing sports every day, my legs melted down to normal size.

[13] In fact, I may have looked her way, then looked away, but her presence didn't register. I certainly *didn't* look away because she was calling and I'd decided to just ignore her. At the time, it would never have passed through my mind to disobeyed her in that way . . . though she evidently didn't know that.

pleased.

As it was getting dark, I finally did go home. When I arrived, she accused me of ignoring her when she called and said I could go without dinner that night. I said I hadn't heard her. This sent her into a real tizzy because as far as she was concerned, not only had I ignored her, I was now *lying* about ignoring her.

Mom had a temper that was legendary.[14] She was getting madder and madder as I repeatedly denied hearing her. Finally, she became so furious that I admitted to lying just to get her to calm down. She did, but only after giving me a spanking and grounding me for several days.

There was quite a time period after that first instance when nothing went wrong and life was easy, but when we got to San Marino and I approached my junior high days, a bunch of situations arose in which I was accused of doing something I hadn't done but *could* have done and, upon denying it, was accused of lying.

You would think that by that time I'd have become strong enough to tell the truth and stick to it, but Mom's tendency to become furious when she thought she was being crossed hadn't subsided over the years. So, short of running away (something I never considered, though I did, once, consider for about 2 seconds throwing me and my bike in front of a speeding car), taking the coward's way out made the most sense if all I wanted was a peaceful existence, which was the case.

In short, each time something would happen, I would first try the truth. If not accepted, I would end up admitting to whatever I was being accused of just to keep Mom from exploding.

I should mention again that in looking back, I really don't blame her for any of this. She had taken several child-psych classes while in college and, as a consequence, thought she knew all about kids. As far as she could tell, at least from where she was sitting, I appeared to be going through a very perverse stage in which I was prone to acting out, then lying about whatever I had done so as not to have to take responsibility for my actions. Being a good mother, it was her responsibility to move me out of this very destructive way of thinking. Intellectually, it all made perfect sense to her.

Unfortunately—or fortunately, depending upon how you look at it—several things happened just after I got into junior high school for which I couldn't take the coward's way out. For instance, Stu had a favorite carving knife he used when he would barbecue chicken outside on the weekends. One Saturday afternoon, he couldn't find it.

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[14] When she would get mad at Stu, she would often go for days without speaking to him.

Mom approached me and said, “Did you take the knife?”

I’d say, “No.”

She didn’t believe me and we were off to the races. I wouldn’t give the knife back, as far as she was concerned, so she tried using a belt to beat me into giving the knife back. That didn’t work, of course, because I had no idea where the knife was. In fact, it wasn’t until later in the week that the knife turned up. It had dropped down into the bottom of the dishwasher. She, of course, assumed I had put it there.[15]

The whole mess was a no-win situation, and it wasn’t fun. In fact, I remember very much enjoying the quiet of late-night, even making myself wake up around 3 AM nightly just to enjoy the peace. It was at those times that I knew she was asleep and nothing could go wrong.

What finally stopped the nightmare was Stu’s wallet disappearing one Friday afternoon. It was during the summer between my seventh and eighth grade. Mom went through her usual series of questions. Of course, because I had no idea where the wallet was, I couldn’t admit to having taken it and accept responsibility. It was, as usual, an awful situation.

The entire weekend was a tension-filled horror with recriminations and swattings and threats. Finally, Monday came. Being at the end of summer, I didn’t have the luxury of getting out of the house to go to school. Stu went to work. Around 9 am, he called to tell her that he had found his wallet at the office. He had evidently left it there the Friday before and hadn’t realized it.

Mom initially didn’t want to admit that she had been wrong, but she wasn’t stupid and, I think, finally realized that she could have been way off base in a lot of previous instances. The two of us had to come to some kind of understanding.

The deal was simple. If I promised I would never lie to her “again,” she would believe whatever I told her from there on.

I said *OK* with a huge sigh of relief, and that was the end of it.

It is interesting that while all of this was happening, with the exception of the times when all hell was breaking loose, I was still a relatively happy kid. No matter the case, the experience made me particularly sensitive in later years to not accuse people of anything I was not completely

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[15] I found out later why she thought I had pulled the stunt. Earlier that week, I had asked for a new bicycle. Because Mom and my stepdad had intended to give me a new bike for Christmas, they didn’t want to ruin the Christmas surprise so they said *no*. Mom thought I was *acting out* because I was angry because I thought I wasn’t getting the bike I had asked for. Again, it all made sense from her perspective, it was just all dead wrong.

sure they had done.[16]

MORE IMPORANTLY, though (and this is huge), the experience with my mom taught me at a gut level a very valuable lesson: *In life, THINGS ARE NOT ALWAYS WHAT THEY SEEM!*

There was one other point of order associated with the situation. Mom's reaction from the start seemed rational on the surface, but her reluctance to take my word for anything was so strong that it was almost as though someone was whispering in her ear that I couldn't be trusted—something I will, once again, say more about later.

In any event, after all of this died down and I grew up, I became good friends with her. She was the one I could confide in during my college years when girl-problems crept up. She was always interested, always willing to listen. The ordeal had not changed me much, but I think it changed her considerably.

Addendum as of 2024 with a slightly different tone.[17]

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16 It is interesting that every single time something has disappear from Poly's physics lab and I've thought *some kid has lifted it*, I have held off making class-wide accusations and in *every single instance* have found that, indeed, *I* was the one who was responsible for misplacing the item. Not jumping to conclusions has saved me from a lot of embarrassment over the years.

17 I just remembered this and its fun, so I thought I'd inject it here. It is one more adventure that happened during my time at Somerset Place. Cathy Dick, whose last name was a constant source of amusement for us neighborhood boys, was a neighborhood girl who was, maybe, five years older than I. One year, she decided to put on a play—I think it was Cinderella. She staged it out of her garage using neighborhood kids as actors. She did quite an amazing job of it. I was only in one scene and had a very small part, but that was OK with me.

On the night of the play during the second act, which I wasn't in, I had to use the bathroom. The bathroom was in the house, and it had a window that looked out into the backyard where the neighborhood parents were gathered, watching the play. Not wanting to draw attention to what I was doing, I didn't turn the light on when I entered the bathroom. There was enough ambient light in the room to see the commode, so I proceeded to pee with the light off. As I did, I noticed an oddly muffled sound instead of the normal splashing one hears when peeing standing up. Curiosity peeked, I turned on the light. What I found to my horror was that the toilet lid was *down* and I had peed, not *into* the toilet but *onto* the lovely, decorative, rug-like cover that adorned the closed lid. As I said, I was horrified. I mopped things up as best I could, then slunk out hoping nobody would notice I'd been in the bathroom and realize that I was, in fact, the mad peer.

I clearly had a knack; life for me was rarely dull!

Chapter 2

The Wonder Years -Part 2-

[It would seem that I have strayed from my story a bit, so back to my new life in San Marino.]

It was my first year at the elementary school in the area, K. L. Carver. I was in the fourth grade when I arrived, and because I was new my mother decided to change my name from Craig Leland Scott to Craig Scott Fletcher. She had taken my stepdad's name and thought it would be easier if my last name and her last name were the same. I didn't much care, but in thinking back I'm sure it hurt my real dad's feelings. In any case, it happened that first year we were in San Marino.

Dealing with the academic side of Carver in the fourth grade was pretty stressful. Kids in the district had learned how to multiply all the way up to *five*, for instance, by the end of the third grade, and were scheduled to learn their *six* through *tens* during the fourth grade. My previous school hadn't even *mentioned* multiplication tables, much less memorizing them, which meant I had some serious catching up to do.

Not being used to academic rigor, I frankly had a hard time. There were girls in my class who were reading thick books—*a whole inch thick*! I was way out of my league.

Carver had a great athletic program. In reality it was just a bunch of kids who wanted to play after school, but we were lucky to live in a school district that had the money to organize stuff like that through the school's PE department.

As the school went up to the sixth grade, I was an insignificant nobody when I arrived. Nevertheless, I signed up to play football. I remember the captain, a huge sixth grader, asking me if I could block. I had been shown a cross-body block by one of the PE teachers at my previous school, so I tried it on this behemoth. He laughed when I did, but he let me on the

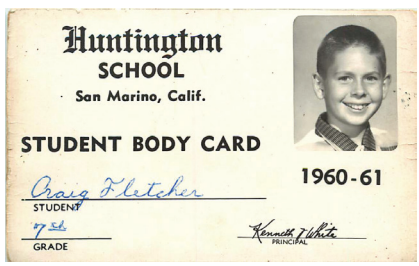
team, anyway. What was truly bizarre was that within a year, I had earned a nickname. It seems I was unusually good at catching a football, so they began calling me *sticky fingers*. It was dumb, but it happened.[1]

Summers, as always, were fun. I'd ride my bike to school to make ice cream or eat watermelon and do crafts and play, just like in Covina. It was all very safe and carefree.

During the school year, my time at Carver was relatively happy. I did sports, I did academics (not terribly well, but I tried hard), I had crushes. I even had a crush on an older woman, my fifth grade teacher, Miss. Fletcher. But life was different from what it had been in Covina. I still rode my bike everywhere, but there weren't the open fields and tract houses to play in. The kids were considerably more social, something I didn't know much about. I wasn't bashful. I remember telling several girls during my time at Carver that I "liked them," but I wasn't very graceful in my approach and really had no clue as to what was going on with the fairer sex.

We were living in the lower San Marino house when my parents adopted my sister, Patty, who was under a year old when they got her. I was thirteen at the time. I distinctly remember that when she would cry, I was the only one who could get her to quiet down and even go to sleep while walking with her in my arms. I did the usual *good brother* things—I baby sat, I changed her diapers, I patted her to sleep in her crib when she would wake up in the middle of the night,[2] but because we were so far apart in age I really didn't bond with her or do much with her when she got older.

We were still living in lower San Marino when I graduated from Carver and started my seventh grade year at *Huntington Junior High School*. That was when Carver's students, Huntington School's students and Valentine School's students all melded into one. I still rode my bike to school every day, but now it was all uphill in the morning, was consid-


Huntington
SCHOOL
San Marino, Calif.
STUDENT BODY CARD
1960-61
Craig Fletcher
STUDENT
7 SL
GRADE
Kenneth J. White
PRINCIPAL

[1] In one game when I was in the sixth-grade I laid out horizontally diving to catch a long pass coming in from over the top of my head. I caught it with my fingertips. You see that kind of thing in college and the pros; you don't see that kind of thing very often from an 11-year-old.

[2] My room was right next to hers—mom and Stu's room was down the hall.

erably farther and took me considerably more time (though the ride home was all downhill and quite a hoot). I was still considered one of the fairly talented jocks, but by that time there were a number of other very good athletes in the class.

The social climate at Huntington was even stiffer than it had been at Carver. Within a month of arriving, one of the most popular Huntington girls let it be known that she thought I was cute. She was, at the time, going steady, so my telephone calls to her had to be done discretely. Her infatuation for me lasted until she realized what an inept schmuck I was.

I really had no idea what was going on with girls, how to talk to them in person, how to impress them, how to deal with them, and *especially* how to deal with their girlfriends (they always seemed to be in clumps). All of the girls were considerably more sophisticated than I, so when they were in a group, I never knew if they were laughing with me or at me. In fact, I cringingly remember walking into the Copa de Oro, an ice cream shop on Huntington Drive, running into the girl accompanied by her friends, and being so embarrassed, horrified, freaked . . . you name it . . . that upon seeing her and the army that surrounded her I turned and quite literally ran out of the store. It wouldn't have been so bad if she and her friends hadn't seen me do it, but I just didn't know how to handle myself (in fact, this happened a couple of times).

This ineptness with the fairer sex couldn't have been more grievously obvious, assuming the last story wasn't grievous enough, than when it came to another female acquaintance I had—a girl named Darlene.

I was twelve. Every few weeks, my dad would pick me up and I would spend the weekend at his house in Covina. It turned out that there were a lot of kids in the neighborhood. The people next door were very nice and had two daughters. One of the daughters was a few years younger than I and the other was a year older. Darlene was the older.

My first visit was a crashing success. All the neighborhood kids were next door playing tetherball, and I went over to play, too. Although she was the resident tomboy, Darlene was a really cute, fully developed female who had obviously gone through puberty with a vengeance. I, on the other hand, hadn't even approached puberty.

She had never been beaten by anyone in the neighborhood at tetherball. I challenged her to a game and blew her away. She was impressed and, with that, we became kind of an item . . . sorta.

In fact, the sad truth was that I saw her as a friend. The fact that she

had large breasts, a very pretty face and liked me a lot didn't really take. In fact, at one point in our friendship, she actually took me aside while we and the neighborhood kids were playing *hide and seek* one night and told me that if I would take off my clothes, she would take off her clothes. I don't know exactly how she thought we were going to get away with this, or where she wanted to do this, but my very honest reaction was, *naw, that's OK*.

In looking back, it's obvious to me that she was a nice girl who was simply in the process of learning about herself and learning about life. I was a nice guy who'd had superficial crushes, but I had no idea what to do with a girl who really *liked* me. In other words, I hadn't gotten to the point where I understood females as *sexual* creatures,[3] and that was that.

Anyway, our interaction lasted for a year or so until she rather tentatively told me that she wanted to see other people. Of course, it wasn't evident to me that we had been *seeing* one another in the first place, but I said *OK*. Shortly thereafter, Dad moved away and that was the end of it.

Back at the ranch, it was in the middle of my *junior high* experience that mom and Stu sold the lower San Marino home and bought a big, two story house on the corner of Winston and Ridgeway just a couple of blocks from San Marino High School.[4] It had a great oak tree in the middle of the patio in the back yard directly behind the house where Stu barbecued regularly during the summer, and in the side yard there was a large badminton court with basketball standard at one end where a pool probably should have been.

The two-story house was long and narrow with an enormous living room. Stu added a den where a covered patio/porch connecting the house to the garage had been, and the house had a great balcony across the upstairs front (see photo). My room was upstairs at one

[3] And yes, several years later it crossed through my mind WHAT WAS I THINKING?

[4] . . . remember that address, also . . . 2590 Ridgeway Rd . . .

end (on the right in the picture), my sister's room was in the middle, and my parent's room along with an extra bedroom was at the front end of the house. We lived there from my *junior high* years to late college.

Having an upstairs was something I really liked. The absolute first thing I did when I first visited the house before we moved in was to start at the bottom of the curved stairwell and run up the stairs shouting "CHARGE!" just like the crazy uncle in the Cary Grant movie "Arsenic in Old Lace." I'd always wanted to do that. In fact, I regularly did that very thing throughout our stay living there.

It poured rain the day we moved in and the movers had to hoist some of the furniture over the balcony balustrade because they couldn't get the stuff passed the wind in the stair well. I was very excited that first night as I lay in bed all cozy and warm, listening to the rain pouring outside on the roof of my upstairs-room balcony. I'd never lived in a two-story house before. It was, as far as I was concerned, very fun.

As I was still going to Huntington, I was still riding my bike to school (versus walking, which I did throughout high school). The big difference was that my ride was now flat and only a third of the previous distance. I was, in short, in pig heaven.

High school definitely had its ups and downs. I had learning disabilities that were never identified but that made comprehending stuff difficult. That, coupled with my sense of humor and an abiding desire to be the center of attention, made me a teacher's nightmare. I was constantly cracking jokes and fooling around.[5] Still, I liked math but wasn't very good at it, and science was OK, though I got a D in physics in my senior year.[6]

Getting a driver's license was a big deal when I was a kid. It was a lot different than now. Once you got that little card, you could as a six-

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[5] This tendency didn't always take me where I wanted to go. I remember one poor English teacher in *junior high*, for instance, who told us the story behind the word *laconic*. There was, it seems, an area of ancient Greece called Laconia. One day, a general from a neighboring state sent a message to Laconia saying something to the effect of, "If we choose to attack you, you will surely perish." Laconia's reply was, "If." The aggressor attacked and made good on the threat, and the word *laconic*--it means *brief and succinct*--came into the language. I really liked the story, so when the teacher got done telling it, I clapped. It wasn't until later that I realized that because I was such a cutup, he had taken the clapping as a sign of derision. He never told us another story.

[6] Yeth thir, boys and girls, I wasn't always a physics wizard.

teen-year old drive anywhere with anyone at any time.[7] At a minimum, I'm sure parents were delighted as it meant they no longer had to *drive the kid* on dates, etc. (this was back when the standard was for kids to *go* on dates), and it was very cool for kids having the kind of freedom that comes with that kind of privilege.[8]

Living in San Marino, there were a lot of kids whose parents had money and who consequently had been bought nice cars, many of which were hotrods.[9] My parents didn't have money to burn on a car for me, so I was on my own when it came to buying one. I had been working weekends for Stu cleaning up his construction sites, making a couple of dollars an hour (good wages for the times), and had saved up $250 toward a car. Roger, one of my buddies, worked at a gas-station-turned-hotrod shop at night and lived and breathed fast cars. He found me a Corvette with a blower scoop coming out of its hood, but I couldn't afford it and had to pass.

Still, being the intrepid soul that I was, I wanted a car that would make me stand out in a crowd (what guy doesn't). Solution? I took my $250, called on an ad I'd found in the paper and made arrangements to buy

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[7] I took advantage of this freedom the first summer I had my license, driving a friend's mom's Rambler up to June Lake in the Mammoth Mountain area with the guy and another friend, to do car camp for a week . . . when I was sixteen!

[8] As was probably the case with most normal kids, the first cars I had access to drive were my mom's and my stepdad's. If I wanted to go on a date and have the girl sit next to me, I'd take Stu's Ford Fairlane 500. It wasn't very fast, but it had bench seats. If I wanted to zip around town in something more notable, I'd borrow my mom's car. It was 1964, and in that year Stu bought her (for $2368) a new Ford Mustang. It was the first year they were on the market (so kind of a novelty). It had bucket seats and seat belts neither of which were normal for the cars of the time (the car was definitely revolutionary, not to mention exotic looking). The model Stu ordered had a 260 cubic-inch engine in it (the smallest available), but the car that arrived at San Marino Ford down on Huntington Drive (ours was the second one to be delivered) had a 289 in it with (sadly) a two-barrel carburetor. Mom was very free with letting me borrow it. I remember taking it cruising into Hollywood (Sunset Blvd) and removing the air filter to generate the hissing sound that mimics a blower. It was sort-of quick off the line but because it didn't have a four barrel, it didn't have much beyond that. Roger, my friend who worked in a hotrod shop, found and bought a small, very old dragster with a tiny engine in it. We raced and he left me at the line as though I was standing still. Still, being able to cruise in a new Mustangs was pretty cool. (Today, a 1964 Mustang is worth anywhere from $20,000 to $40,000, depending upon its condition.)

[9] This was not always a good thing. One of my classmates, Mike, crashed his '55 Chevy one evening, flew through the windshield and ended up having over three-hundred stitches in his face. A friend of his who was working at the Huntington Hospital that night saw Mike come in and didn't even recognize him, the damage was so extensive. Seat belts and safety glass are a wonderful thing. They were just twenty years too late in coming for him.

a used 1932 hearse (complete with side lanterns).[10]

That's right. I found an ad in the newspaper for a hearse that was owned by a mortuary in a small town in the desert. They were getting a new ride and wanted to get rid of their old model (this was all happening in 1964). After making the deal to buy the car, all I had to do was wait until the new model was delivered to the mortuary and I could have my hearse.

So I waited, and waited, and waited. Three months later, I finally gave up and bought a black, 1956 Ford station wagon just like the one shown to the right. The day after I made the purchase, the hearse folks called to say I could come pick up my vehicle. To the great relief of my mom, I had to say *no* as I no longer had the money.

The station wagon had a 312 cubic inch engine in it with a three speed on the column. It wasn't standard hotrod fair, but it went OK and I could get rubber in second gear if I speed shifted, which I did regularly.

I put a mattress in the back hoping against hope that at some point in time I might convince a date to join me there while at a drive-in movie (ahhh, the hopes of the young), and I slept in it down at the beach once. It was a ride I thoroughly enjoyed owning.

I had the car for two years. In my senior year, I talked my mom into letting me step up into a considerably more expensive (and edgy) vehicle. True, I had to get a job delivering chicken for Chicken Delight to pay for it. After all, there was insurance to deal with and gas had recently gone from 29¢ to 32¢ a gallon (I was incensed when they raised the price, but life could have been worse). I was hot to trot, though, so she let me skip school one day and the two of us went to a car lot in Arcadia where I bought a two year old, shiny red GTO.

For those of you who are unaware, the GTO was a factory hotrod made by Pontiac. It had a 389 cubic inch engine with three two-barrel carburetors and four on the floor (that is, for you Prius owners, it had a manual four speed with

[10] I would tell this story to my physics students as preamble to the MOB maneuver, which you will hear about later, and a surprising number of them didn't know what a hearse was. If that's you, it's the vehicle that coffins are carried in during funeral processions. Not exactly conventional transportation, but notable!

its shifter on the floor). In theory, it was built to race. Unfortunately, the designers of the car apparently had no idea how to balance it for traction, so when I'd get on it from a stand-still it would just sit there with its back tires spinning and smoking like mad, going nowhere.

If I'd had my wits about me, I'd have put sandbags in the trunk to make its rear heavier for traction purposes, but I didn't and so the car was a complete flop as a drag racer. I even remember having a guy in a piece of junk with a big engine in it (you could tell by the throb of the motor as it sat idling at the signal) pull up next to me on Colorado Blvd one night, roll down his window, rev his engines and say, "I'll bet my car can take yours any day."

To his considerable surprise, my reply was, "Probably so."

I have to say, though, the car looked great. Additionally, as long as I wasn't starting from a stand still, it was an amazingly fast machine. If I was going 20 mph and put my foot to the floor, the engine would roar, the entire car would elevate like it was on jacks and the beast would accelerate like a shot.

I was a very lucky guy. Still, its shake-down cruise was a little disconcerting. I say this because what I didn't know when I got it was that it had a bit of a problem. This became apparent on the first weekend I had the car.

With news of the new vehicle, a bunch of my friends wanted to go cruise *Bob's Big Boy* on Colorado Blvd on Friday night. *Bob's* in Pasadena was a drive-in at the time, and it was where all the cool cars (and people) congregated.[11] We hadn't gone more than a block when, upon going over a bump, we heard a horrible grinding sound coming from underneath the car. It was as though something was eating the undercarriage. Everybody got out and took a look. Nothing was obvious, so we all got back in and drove a few more blocks. Upon taking another bump, it did it again. Clearly there was something wrong with the car.

The next day I took the vehicle back to the dealer and explained the problem. They put it on the rack, checked it over and told me that, apparently, the drive train had somehow been bent. It was under warrantee, so no big deal, but it was weird. They took a few days to fixed it whereupon I was on my way.

About a month later on a Sunday, I was at home when there was a knock on the front door. I opened it to find a very pretty girl who was

[11] There is now, lamentably, a shoe store *across from the Target that used to be Fedco* that is sitting where the Bob's Big Boy sat—a serious pisser for cruising kids everywhere.

around my age standing there. I asked if I could help her and she said, "Are you the guy who bought the GTO?"

I couldn't believe my good fortune as I said, "Yes."

This, it turned out, was the girl who had owned the GTO before me. She was a sophomore at UCLA when her parents had bought her the car, and within three months she had accumulated so many tickets that her father took it away from her and sold it. According to her, she had come to give me the bottle of touch-up paint that she had for the car. She then invited me to come visit her (she lived in Arcadia) whenever I wanted.

I did, indeed, drop in on her once. During that visit, she told me how the car had been damaged.

If you know anything about the beach community at San Clemente, you will know that there is a road through San Clemente about a half-mile inland from the beach and parallel to the Pacific Coast Highway. What is different about this road is that it is comprised of a long stretch of undulating ups and downs. Driving it, even at sane speeds, is quite a *roller coaster*-like experience.

Evidently, one of her friends bet her she didn't have the balls to drive her car through that section going 100 mph. She won the bet, but because the car completely lifted off the road every time it passed over the crest of one of the mini hills, the drive train bent due to the beating it took every time the car came crashing down.

This was a very fun girl, but she was also obviously way out of my league, so nothing came of it besides a cool story.[12]

It was in high school that athletics really became important to me. I played football, basketball, and baseball on the frosh team, but by my sophomore year my parents made me cut it down to just two sports. Part of their decision rested on the fact that my grades were not spectacularly good, and part, possibly, on the fact that I was injured during baseball season.

The injury happened when I was trying out for catcher on the frosh team. I was close to the smallest kid on the team—not a characteristic you want in a catcher back in the day when relatively violent collisions at the plate were common—but I had a rocket for an arm and had played the

[12] You can imagine what I did with that story when I became a physics teacher. On nearly every Newton's Second Law/centripetal force test I've given since starting at Poly, I've asked my students to derive an expression that would allow them to determine the maximum speed a car could take the crest of a hill and *not* lift off as it went over the top.

position in Pony League for two years. It was near the end of practice one day when one of the kids hit a single. A big kid on second base—his name was Muellerscheon, which nicely fit his stature—rounded third base on the hit and tried to make it home.

I was in a crouch, ready to receive the throw and pounce on the sliding player, but instead of sliding he just ran into me. The kid, I think, was being a bit of a prick, but it was also the reasonable thing to do. He *was*, after all, wearing shorts—not the ideal apparel for sliding. As we collided his knee came up and caught me across the mid-section. I held on to the ball but went down in a lump. When I got up, I knew something was wrong.

I lived two short blocks from school. The play at the plate had been the last play of practice, so the coach lined us up for wind sprints. I didn't think twice. I walked down toward the wind sprints area and just kept on going. Five minutes later, I was home. I felt drowsy but couldn't lie down because when I did my stomach would hurt. I'd sit up to make the hurt go away, and I'd feel drowsy again. It wasn't a good thing.

When my stepdad got home, I told him what happened and he took me to Huntington Hospital. They kept me for observation. After two days, I was moving around fairly freely. I woke up on the third morning, though, with an odd sensation in my right shoulder. If I left the shoulder immobile, it would begin to feel as though it was dislocated. It didn't hurt. It just felt like it wasn't where it belonged.

I told the doctor. They operated later that afternoon. (It seems that there is a reflex between the spleen and the right shoulder—with the shoulder acting up, the doctor suspected the spleen had a problem.)

It is fortunate that they did operate. The spleen was cracked. It had kind of glazed over after the accident, but with my moving around more and more, the glazing began to break open and the organ began to weep. It was funny, though. The surgeon who did the cutting said that I had the thickest stomach muscles he had ever encountered. No biggie. It still took me a good month-and-a-half before I could play baseball again.

As I said, during my sophomore year I chose the two sports I would continue to play. My choices were my favorite, football, and my second favorite, baseball.

As a junior, I began the year as the second-string wingback on the varsity football team. The first game of the pre-season was against Arcadia.

During that game, the senior who played first string got a detached retina. I was sent in and, on my very first play, had to run a wingback reverse. I was terrified. I hit the line tentatively and made, maybe, eight yards when I probably could have made more. A friend of mine was standing next to one of the coaches who, at the completion of the play, turned to another of the coaches and said, "'Well, Fletcher's got his head up his ass, again." It wasn't very flattering, but what the hell, I was a receiver (remember *sticky fingers*?) not a halfback.

Life got a whole lot more exciting from there on. Every game we were supposed to win we'd lose, and every game we were supposed to lose we'd win. By the last game of the season, we were playing La Canada for first place.[13] (That's me, #31, in the newspaper photo below.)

La Canada Wins a Titan-ic Stru

INDEPENDENT STAR-NE

HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING—San Marino wingback Craig Fletcher and head coach Bob Cunz talk over the situation as Titans trail La Canada in Friday night's big Rio Hondo League match. La Canada, defending league champion, won for the second straight year on 17-7 decision.

That game came down to the last fifteen seconds with us behind by six. We were on our own forty-yard line. I was lined up on the right. Haley, our quarterback, rolled to his left while I sprinted toward the right sideline, then up field. Once on the left side of the field, Haley turned and threw what was probably a sixty-yard pass that I caught over my shoulder on about the fifteen-yard line. Because I had to slow to catch the ball, defenders caught me on about the five-yard line where I went out of bounds

13 We were clearly supposed to lose a lot more games than we were supposed to win.

stopping the clock with three seconds left.

On the last play of the game, Haley dropped straight back. One of our halfbacks slid through the line and into the end zone, Haley threw the pass an instant too soon, and just as the halfback turned to look for the ball it blew by him.

With the loss, we ended up tied with three other teams for second place in league. It was, at the time, a real bummer, but in the long run it turned out to be the luckiest occurrence of the season.

At the end of the regular season, the folks at CIF needed one more team to round out the post season play-off schedule. Because ours was the toughest league, they decided to take our second-place team. The dilemma was that there were four of us. The initial decision was to take Duarte—a team that had a spectacularly good running back. It turned out, though, that *we* had beaten Duarte along with all the other second place teams. So although they weren't that crazy about the idea, CIF had to take us instead of their original selection.

To everyone's surprise, we won the first two games handily. I didn't start the first game,[14] but I did start the second one.

The last game was against Thousand Oaks and, of course, they were supposed to bury us. They were bigger than we were, they were faster than we were and they had crushed La Canada the week before.[15] What they *weren't* was respectful of the possibility that the loser of the La Canada/San Marino match-up might have been the better team (or, at the very least, a competitive team).

That was a big mistake.

We played magnificently with everything going our way. I remember running a deep hook in serious traffic, getting hit hard just *before* the ball arrived, and having the defender so wrap me up just as the ball hit my chest that he actually held the ball up against my pads as I fell to the ground. It

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[14] Ben, my friend and the other wingback, started the first game. I was sent in on the second play and played for most of the rest of the game. This seemed odd to me after the fact until I realized that our coach might have put Ben down as the starter to fake out the other coach. Ben was big and more of a blocker than a receiver. I, on the other hand, was primarily a receiver. Having Ben start might have suggested to an outsider that we intended to run more than pass, which wasn't the case. For the second game, I asked my mom to buy a program so I could see my name in it as starter. Unfortunately, the CIF folks hadn't bothered to check to see if the line-up had changed from the first game, so Ben's name was still there. I was bummed, but that was life.

[15] If we had beaten La Canada in that last game and had won the league championship, we would have faced Thousand Oaks the week earlier . . . and would probably have lost.

was a twenty-yard pick-up we should have never had.[16]

We ran a fake punt for big yardage; we ran a tackle eligible that scored a touchdown; our offense dominated; our defense dominated; WE WERE AWESOME THAT NIGHT . . . which was great because if we'd had to play them nine more times, they'd have probably beaten the crap out of us every time.

That night, though, we could do no wrong. We, the so-called *Cinderella team* according to the newspapers, that only won the ones we were supposed to lose, were CIF champions![17]

Although it never really registered with me, I was the second smallest guy on the football team (*I* thought I was a beast). So between my junior and senior year, my football coach asked that I bulk up. The idea of weight training hadn't yet arrived on the scene, so to accommodate I ate hugely all summer long. I would start out every morning with six eggs, five pieces of bacon, three pieces of toast and a glass of milk. For lunch I'd have two hamburgers, potato chips and two protein-ladened, ice cream malts (my mom would make them special for me). Dinner would consist of a plate of meat, a baked potato, a plate of vegetables, whatever we were having for dessert and, again, a protein ladened malt. And at midnight I would go up to Bob's Big Boy (which, as I said earlier, was a drive-in on Colorado Blvd) and have two Big Boys, an order of fries and a coke. I did this every day the entire summer. By the end of the summer had gained five pounds. As a kid, I apparently had a very high metabolism.

Unfortunately, none of this mattered because in my senior year, football was an absolute disaster. We had essentially the same team as the year before but nothing went right. I managed to rip all the tendons and ligaments out of my right shoulder on the seventh day of practice before

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16 I really was hit hard the instant before the ball arrived, so I probably wouldn't have held on to the ball if the defender hadn't wrapped his arms. Little did he know that in doing so, he literally caught the ball *for* me.

17 It's funny how superstitious athletes can be, myself included. The first game we played in the CIF round, as we were coming out of the locker room just before the game, some fan standing close by said rather loudly, "Poor San Marino," the implication being that we were going to find ourselves getting beaten up pretty badly. We, of course, won that game. Before the *second* game, again coming out of the locker room, I was kind of amazed to hear still *another* fan make the same statement. So when we got into the finals, as we were leaving the locker room, I was listening to hear if someone else might make that same comment, the hope being that if they did it would be a sign that we would win the big game. And sure enough, someone *did*. Let's hear it for weird occurrences and superstition!

school even started,[18] and it was downhill from there.

Athletics in my senior year was one of the most depressing series of experiences I had as a teen. Aside from the horrific football season, our baseball team wasn't very good, either. As a consequence, the coach decided to play his starters, myself included, then give the second stringers—the guys who would still be around the next year—experience by playing them the last half of each game. It was a sensible thing for him to do, but I decided it was a waste of my time to sit on the bench for half the game so I quit the team, much to the irritation of the coach.

Girlfriends during my high school career existed, but I still didn't understand females at all. My first real girlfriend was a very sweet young lady named Jody. Jody and I were in the same Driver's Ed class as sophomores. She was pretty, though that wasn't the main attraction. What made Jody interesting was her zany sense of humor. In fact, her whole family was "crazy" (meant in the good sense). I remember her talking about her five-foot eleven-inch-tall younger sister paraded around with her five-foot one-inch tall boyfriend on her shoulders at a party one time. It must have

[18] How I managed this was a monument to how *lame-brained* I was as a high school senior. During the two weeks before school started, we had two-a-day practices for football. Out of sheer laziness, when I'd finish practice I'd wad up the T-shirt I was wearing underneath my pads and throw it into my locker. Next practice, I'd put the sweat soaked T-shirt back on. After several days of this, the T-shirt was saturated with a salty-brine, and at some point I began to get a rash in the armpit area where the pad straps rubbed the shirt against my flesh. To relieve the pain of the rash, I loosened the straps thereby almost completely circumventing any protection the pad might give me should I run into, say, our 230-pound, five-foot seven-inch tall fullback while going full tilt. In fact, that's exactly what I did. The consequence was that I ripped every tendon and ligament in my shoulder out of my right shoulder, had to go to the Huntington Hospital for X-rays and ended up missing the next month or so of practice and the first game of the season.

I spent that month during practice with an immobile right arm (the idea of physical therapy for sports injuries was decades away) playing catch with my good left hand on the sideline (no small feat as I'm right-handed). When I was ready to begin playing again, I was favoring my hurt right shoulder. The coaches weren't sure about me, so during practice they had me do a hook pattern and instructed Haley to throw me a blisteringly hot pass high above my head and to the left so I'd have to reach up for it. They wanted to see if I could get my right hand up over my head to make the catch, except things didn't exactly work out as expected. Haley threw the zinger and, without moving my right hand and without a thought, I reached up and caught the ball with my single left hand. I noticed the coaches kind of laughing. It told them what they needed to know, that I wasn't ready, but it also told them that I could catch a ball better with my solo left hand than most players could with both hands. They didn't let me play in the first game of the season, which we lost. Like I said, it was all downhill from there.

been wild, and the whole family had the knack.

Unfortunately, neither of us really knew what we were doing in the way of love. We would lie around on her couch when her parents weren't home, cuddling to beat all, and we would go to parties and have tons of fun, but I never kissed her "French-style" because I had no clue that that even existed. And even if I had known, I doubt she would have been interested in experiencing it.

We talked about having sex only once. She said she intended to wait until marriage, which was not unusual at the time for *a good Catholic girl*. I obviously didn't want to wait,[19] so when she told me one night that she loved me, all manner of fear popped into my head.

I was too young for real, live love. And besides, she didn't want to have sex—something I hadn't yet had but very much wanted to experience.

How was I going to deal with that?

I dealt with it badly! I broke up with her.

She was heart-broken, but everything turned out OK in the end. She began to date another guy in our class several months later, and they ended up staying together and getting married after college (as best I know, they are still happily married).

I had a couple of other female friends over the course of my high school years, but none were serious enough to allow me to go beyond casual petting. I had a strong sense of who I was willing to go out with and who I wasn't willing to go out with. I only wanted to date girls I personally found attractive (you know, pretty, popular, fun, sexy--all very superficial), and that was all there was to it.

I didn't consciously view myself as being an attractive guy—in fact, I wasn't,[20]—but subconsciously I seemed to act as though I thought I was. My pickiness just seemed to be a part of me. As a consequence, I managed to shoot myself in the foot more than once by being glib and off handed to girls who were really very nice, and who were attractive in their own way, and who I suspect kind of liked me but who just didn't catch my fancy.

I was, in short, edging toward becoming an insensitive asshole . . . a characteristic that would, unfortunately, blossom fully once I hit college.

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[19] I was still kicking myself regularly for passing up Darlene's invitation from a few years earlier.

[20] I'll talk about this later. What brought me to that understanding was quite amusing.

Chapter 3

The College Years -Part 1-

I always enjoyed school, but not because I was particularly motivated in an academic sense. Girls and sports—that's what I was about when I was eighteen. When I was in high school, the expectation of college didn't play a big part in my life. It was just something one did after high school. My original intention was to go to Pasadena City College and play football there, though given my size there was little chance I actually would have made it. During the latter portion of my senior year, another possibility arose.

My dad, Ray Scott, was a CPA and *Vice President of Accounting* in the commodities firm Anderson, Clayton. That company had, within the previous year, moved to Phoenix, Arizona. My dad was a bright guy (I got my math propensities from him, not to mention my cowlick). I loved him, naturally, but I also liked him. We got along well.

Toward the end of my senior year, Mom suggested that it might be nice for me to go to Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona. Tempe is right next to Scottsdale where my dad lived. I liked the idea. I talked to him about it and he liked the idea. I applied to ASU and was accepted.[1]

My first year was as a math major. When I decided I didn't like the abstractness of the classes, I went into electrical engineering. That was the field in which I got my undergraduate degree . . . though that's getting way ahead of the story.

Grad Night took place as usual at San Marino High School. The junior class parents fixed the school gym up to look like (at least for our year) a Southern mansion, chandeliers and all. The transformation was amazing. As was the case all over the country, it was an *all night* affair.

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[1] This is clearly a "back in the day" story. Imagine a kid applying to *any* major university these days a few months before the end of his or her senior year, and finding that the kid actually got in!

My date was a very pretty, sexy, Westridge girl I'd dated briefly several months earlier. The night was slightly marred when, around 3 A.M., she told me she was actually going steady with another guy at the time. Being a relatively normal, self-interested fellow, you can imagine how well *that* news went over.

I dropped her off at the end of the night after having ignored her completely for a good three hours, got rubber in second gear as I sped off and arrived home around 7 A.M. I had a few hours of sleep, then went off to have a root canal done.

The oral surgeon gave me a local anesthetic so I could be awake and have the thrill of experiencing what a cantaloupe must feel like when a spoon scoops out its soft, innermost parts. It didn't hurt because they shot me full of Novocain, but just knowing what they were doing finally got to me. I nearly passed out before they were done.

That night was miserable. The next day I got into my air-conditionless GTO and drove through the 110^{o} Arizona desert to Phoenix to check out ASU. The entire side of my face had swollen up like a balloon due to the root canal, but that was life.[2]

I stayed with my dad when I got to Phoenix. I visited the school, liked it, and made the final decision to attend.

College started in early September. Because I was late in enrolling, I was put in the only dorm on campus that didn't have air conditioning. This wasn't a punishment—it was just the only living quarters available. In fact, the place had been an administrative building that they had converted into a dorm out of necessity.

I was taking four or five showers per day just to cool off, but that wasn't the most outrageous part of the experience. The building's cooling system consisted of a fan in the ceiling of the second story roof. It blew air down into the second story hallway. To get circulation on the ground floor (and this is true, I swear), there was a three-foot diameter, open hole in the middle of the second story *floor* (i.e., through the first story ceiling) directly below the fan. In other words, circulating air from the fan got to the first floor via a hole in the second story floor. If I hadn't seen it with my

[2] I remember stopping at a diner along the way. As I sat eating my hamburger, I had this odd feeling I was being watched. I looked up just in time to see everyone in the place quickly shift their gaze away from me. I wasn't a very introspective kid, but it gave me a feel for what it must be like to be deformed, what with my ballooned face and all. I remember being grateful I wasn't permanently that way.

own eyes, I'd have never believed it. It was a wonder one of the resident drunks didn't come home one night, try to get to his second story room and fall straight through the hole.

Having said all that, you can understand that within the first week, I decided that out of self-preservation I had to find a better place to live.

A few weeks into the school year, fraternity rush started. At the time, fraternities at ASU were at the heart of the social scene. Nevertheless, they were hardly the height of sophistication. The commonly accepted expression for "good" was "king" . . . as in "that was king," and the most common put-down was "hit the bricks." I didn't know any of this. In fact, I didn't know anything about fraternities at all. But if there was a chance I could move into an air-conditioned dwelling by joining one, I was perfectly willing to do so.

There were two fraternity rows at ASU. The newer one was close to campus and included Sigma Chi, Phi Delts, Sigma Nu, SAE, ATO, and a bunch more. The older row had the Delta Sigs, Pikes, Fijis, and some of the older fraternities on campus.

Rush was a kick. The denizens of each house would try to impress you with the wonderfulness of themselves. There were beer bashes and parties, and always girls. I figured out early on that the girls weren't really available for dating, though, as almost all of them were already dating a guy in the house they were representing. Nevertheless, it was fun having people fawn over you.

While we recruits were sizing up the houses, the guys in the houses were sizing up us recruits. If they liked what they saw, they'd extend an invitation to come back. If they didn't, they wouldn't.

As I said, I didn't really know how things worked, so I tripped through this process without much thought. The Sigma Chi's had a lot of varsity athletes, which I didn't know at the time, so when I asked if they had athletes in their fraternity, they were a bit put off. I was deceptively un-athletic in my look—not particularly broad shoulders, not particularly muscular—so I suspect they thought I was some kind of weirdo asking about athletes when I, to them, obviously wasn't one.

I didn't get an invitation back from them, not that it would have mattered. I had made friends with a couple of ATOs. During one of my visits, I had mentioned that I had been a receiver on a CIF championship football team. They became all attention. That kind of talent was something all the fraternities needed to do well in intramural sports. I was a catch, even if I

neither knew it nor looked the part.

The ATOs invited me to a number of parties even getting me a date to one of them. The girl was a sorority sister of the girlfriend of the guy who would act as Pledge Master that next year. She was not too pleased about being pushed into service, so she generally stayed away from me during the party. This was no big deal. It was the first time I'd had more than one beer at a time and, frankly, I was feeling no pain.

Once the dust settled, I pledged ATO.

There were some pretty tough guys in my pledge class. Bramlett was the starting fullback on ASU's football team, and a guy named Riggs was, I think, twenty-six and had spent his previous eight years in the Navy (he was a very salty dog). There were cowboys and surfers amongst the crowd, and at least one guy whose family was connected to the mob in Chicago. These kids were not easily intimidated.[3]

Being a pledge was a trip. We had the opportunity to participate in all the intramural athletics the fraternity was involved in, which was great, but on the downside the "actives" were generally aloof toward us.

As for responsibilities, each pledge was given a task to do around the house. Some were assigned to clean the bathrooms; some were assigned to help the cook. All were expected to serve dinner at least one night out of the week. And we did the occasional oddball thing like a car wash to earn money or participating in an interviewing scheme in which we were supposed to approach girls on campus, interview them, then try to get their phone number.

Actives generally took great pleasure in giving pledges a bad time. The harassment wasn't always malicious, but it was usually mindless. One of the pledges in my class, for instance, had been a high school state-wres-

[3] The guys in the house were general pretty cool, but a few were seriously impaired when it came to *common sense*. Example: One year, one of our number had two final exams just before he was supposed to drive back home to Chicago. He needed to pull an all-nighter for the first test, so he took NoDoz caffeine tablets to stay awake. It did the job and he took the test the next morning. After the test, instead of taking a nap, he began studying for the second test. He studied all day long. When night arrived, he needed to continue studying so he took NoDoz again. He studied the entire night and took the second test the next morning. With his tests completed, he threw everything he wanted to take home into his car and started driving. Wanting to power through to the end, nighttime saw him taking ANOTHER NoDoz. Consequence: he woke up the next morning in his car in the middle of a corn field 200 miles north of where he was supposed to be. His brain had apparently stopped working somewhere along the way, but he just kept driving. How's that for freaky.

tling champion from Illinois. An hour before he was expected to participate in an intramural wrestling match, one of the actives got a wild hair and made him do a hundred push-ups. The active didn't know about the match, but the consequence was that the kid lost the first match of his life because he was so wiped out. It was dumb, and an active was responsible.

One of the other traditional parts of being a pledge was participating in what was called a line-up. They always happened at midnight on an appointed Saturday night. The pledges would initially line up in the dorm part of the house (even though the line-up would take place in the dining area). All the chairs and tables in the dining room would have been moved to one side of the room so that when the pledges filed into that area, they could stand unimpeded along the west wall to wait for the arrival of the actives.

The actives would arrive noisily ten to fifteen minutes after midnight, usually drunk as skunks. They would come in yelling and shouting and proceed to get into the face of whichever pledge they happen to want to harass at the time. They'd do things like ordering a pledge to say something insulting about one of the other actives, then sit back in amusement as the insulted active would come bounding down from the chairs, yelling and screaming at the offender.[4]

It was during line-ups that *the strap* came out. The strap was a two-inch wide, quarter inch thick leather belt that was used to tan the hide of pledges. The drill was that a pledge would bend over, grab his nuts to guard against wrap-around, and waited for the active, who was standing to the side, to hit him on the ass with the strap. When the hit came, the pledge was supposed to jump straight up into the air, land, turn, offer to shake hands, and say, "Thank you sir. I'm proud to be a pledge of Alpha Tau Omega. May I have another?" A lot of the actives were not very good

[4] My first line-up was particularly exciting. I hadn't yet moved into the house, so I was still in that air conditionless dorm. When I arrived for the line-up, I realized I had forgotten my pledge pin. With all my pledge brothers standing at attention along a wall in the dorm part of the fraternity house, I raced back across campus to my room to get my pin. I found it where I left it on my dresser, but as I was streaking out the door to get back to the house, I ran into someone coming in the other way and my pin went flying. Having landed in the grass, I frantically looked for it for about five minutes, then accepted defeat and rushed back to my waiting pledge brothers. They hadn't moved since I'd left, having been counseled *not* to enter the line-up without me. If my pledge dad hadn't let me use his pin, I don't know what would have happened. Still, it is kind of funny. The preamble to that first line-up was so harrowing, I don't remember a single thing that happened once we got into the hall.

at using the strap. When I became an active, I unfortunately was not one of them . . . though I must say I used it rarely.

The strap was an artifact of yesteryear. It was the one thing every pledge vowed would be abolished when he became an active . . . and was the first thing most new actives called for when it became his right to wield the monster. It was a classic example of *I didn't like it being done to me, but I'm more than willing to do it to someone else*. It was barbaric.

That, of course, was not conceded by anyone at the time. The idea behind line-ups was to make the pledges experience a common, awful happening so that they might bond with one another. This was horseshit, of course. There are all sorts of ways to get a bunch of like-minded guys to bond with one another without the use of a strap. That was the company line, though, and it was just mindlessly accepted.

The only other bit of unpleasantness I can remember was the final, initiatory week—*hell week* it was called—that every pledge endured just before becoming an active. My pledge brothers and I were required to stay awake for 144 hours—six days—during hell week. We worked around the house, had line-ups and were generally harassed all the way up to the final night. One of the more amusing aspects of it was that each pledge was given a limerick or rhyme or nickname that he would be required to recite on command during the week.

The pledge class president was always given the same name. It was, and I remember this because I heard it through my cloud of exhaustion probably a hundred times during that week, "Not being informed to the highest degree of reliability, I hesitate to articulate for fear I may deviate from the true and given course, and aggravate not alleviate the delumbrium equilibrium that I am the true and high cockalorum. Gu-ga-gu-gu-gu."

If nothing else, we learned that week that a *high cockalorum* is "a self-important little man."

With the exception of the pledge class president's, almost all of the "names" were foul. Some were tailored to their particular recipient. Some were hold-overs from the past. Of the former, a fellow from a few years earlier whose nickname was *Paddy* had a girlfriend who was, evidently, referred to as *Paddy's pig*. His limerick was, "Paddy's pig peels periodically producing palpitating pussy for pungent Pollocks."

Mine was of the latter sort being, "I'm a fucker, I'm a fighter, I'm a wild bull rider."

During the final night, there was an initiatory twist I won't reveal, primarily because I don't know if it is standard across the board in all ATO

houses or was characteristic of just ours. In any case, the weeklong experience was exhausting and tedious and, supposedly, designed to make one permanently bond with the guys in the house. Whether it succeeded, who knows? That was the way it was, though, and if you wanted to become an active, that was what you put up with.

The other thing I remember about the hell week experience was the very end. There was a huge party at which all of the new actives were "presented" to the fraternity and their dates. During that party, the newly accepted actives were asked to assemble on the stage in front of the band and say their names (we always had a band at our parties). Most of the guys said theirs quickly, especially if it was particularly nasty. Not Dahl (he was one of the bigger, burlier, tough guys in our house). For his girlfriend, someone he would ultimately marry and who had come down from Flagstaff to be at the party, and for the assembled crowd, he loudly, slowly and distinctly said,

I went to Flag to see my hag
To see if she'd suck on my ball bag,
But Flag's a drag, my dick did sag
Cause my girl Linda's on the rag, sir.

His girlfriend was understandably appalled, but most in the crowd thought it was hilarious.

Having said all that, being a pledge wasn't all bad. For instance, twice during the pledging semester the pledges were supposed to plan and execute the kidnapping of two actives. These were called *rides*. The kidnappees were to be taken out into the middle of nowhere where they were released with a dime and a six-pack of beer.[5] If the actives got back to the fraternity house before midnight, the ride was deemed a failure and the pledges would get a line-up. If the actives got back after midnight, no consequences would come.

Although we tried several rides, our one premier attempt required the help of the ATO pledge class from USC in Los Angeles. We contacted them and arranged to swap actives one Friday night at the California/Arizona border in Blythe. They would then take our actives into California

[5] The price of a phone call at a public phone booth at the time was a dime, though the dime could be bent in half if the pledges were clever enough to think of it, and if the pledges were even cleverer, the beer was warm and shaken.

and we would take theirs into Arizona.[6]

The actual kidnapping at our end was like something out of a Laurel and Hardy movie. We grabbed two guys right out of their afternoon class, but when another active saw what was happening we had to grab him, too. We had rented a monstrous, enclosed, U-Haul truck, and the entire pledge class—all forty-five of us—were jammed into the back. We needed money, so we went to an Instant Teller at a local bank, drove through the drive-in, and managed to scrape the monitoring camera right off the ceiling of the drive-through in the process. It was a mess.

We finally got on the road with our three actives. We arrived in Blythe around 9:00 p.m. We were supposed to make the exchange at 11 p.m., so we had time to kill. We hung out for a while, then went into a Denny's restaurant and made the monumental mistake of allowing the actives to sit together as they ate.

At the end of the meal, all three actives jumped up and sprinted for the door. Immediately, forty pledges jumped to their feet and took off after them leaving the poor waitress thinking that all those kids were going to stiff her for the bill. (After she nearly had heart failure, one of the remaining pledges calmed her down and settled the bill for the whole lot.)

We caught two of the actives but the third got away. The rules stipulated that we only had to dump two actives for the ride to be a success, so losing the third wasn't a big deal. Besides, it was at least two hours by car back to Tempe. Because we had removed the wallet of each active, and because it was around 9:45 p.m., we weren't worried. Even if he made a call for help, help wouldn't arrive in time to get him back before midnight.

Secure in the belief that all was still going well, we went out to the trade place and waited.

The USC pledges never showed up, but even that wasn't terribly important. It was late and we were out in the middle of the Arizona desert with the required two actives. We let them go around 11:30 p.m. and made it back to Tempe, celebrating all the way.

We rolled into the parking lot behind the ATO house around 1:30 a.m. to find actives everywhere, hanging out of window, whooping and hollering and having a grand old time. We were in trouble.

"How could that be?" you might ask.

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[6] I told this story to a group of Poly teachers one day, Patrick Carpenter of the Tech department included, and his observation was, " . . . thus elevating mere criminal kidnapping into a Federal offense with the crossing of State borders . . . " *That* was not something we even considered, being the brain-trusts that we were.

It seems that our escapee was ALWAYS getting snagged for rides and had finally begun carrying a credit card in his shoe, just for such occasions. He had flagged down a Blythe police officer, explained his situation, got a ride to the Blythe airport, rented a plane and pilot, flew to Phoenix International Airport and was back inside the house five minutes before midnight. The ride had, indeed, failed. A line-up was looming.

The line-up was scheduled for the next weekend. In the week leading up to the line-up, several actives told us we needed to present a united front and, with a sense of unity, be as rebellious as possible. On the appointed evening, maybe an hour before the line-up, we were told that the required attire was suits. We complied by wearing *swimming* suits.

It was bold and rebellious, and it impressed the actives to the point that they called off the line-up. We felt very cool about the whole thing, but I suspect the actives were hoping for something like that all along. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised to find that the escapee didn't really get back to the house before midnight on the night of the ride, and the actives weren't intending to give us a line-up, anyway. It had all been a giant "get."[7]

In any case, we were happy and I will never forget what a kick it was trying to pull off that ride.

Another of the really fun things about pledging and fraternity life in general was the athletics. For the first several months after joining the fraternity and moving into the house, my mid-to-late afternoons were populated with pick-up football games with the guys in the house. ASU's track was located out our back door and across the street, but directly adjacent to our back parking lot was an expanse of cut grass fields. We'd snag an area and play from 3:00 to 5:00 pm or so. Afterward, I'd have a shower, then have dinner. Even later in the year, there was always something athletic going on in the afternoon.

The intramural program at ASU was thriving. For almost any sport, forty-to-sixty *not so shabby* fraternity and independent teams would be fielded. The first year I was there, our seven-man flag football team got to the finals. I played quarterback primarily because we didn't have anyone else to do the job. We had a guy who had dropped out as a pledge, but who stuck around to play sports and come to parties anyway (his brother was an active). Aside from being a nice guy, he held Arizona's high school

[7] This was another one of those obscure fraternity slang sayings. It meant *joke*, though you'd think that the word *joke* would have sufficed.

decathlon record. His name was Barry Sollenberger.[8] Barry could run the hundred-yard dash in 9.9 seconds when the world record was 9.3 seconds.

I remember throwing Barry these high, arcing, fifty-yard passes that he would have to sprint under to catch. I threw them that way to give him a chance to outrun his defender, which he always did, but it used to make him mad. I remember him coming back to the huddle after a touchdown one game and saying, "One of these days, *God* is going to intercept one of your passes."

Still, my being quarterback wasn't that great a deal. I had a terrific arm but wasn't all that accurate in the passing department. More to the point, I didn't like being confined in a pocket. I was very quick (remember those thighs), so I would invariably scramble at the drop of a hat. I can remember our linemen being mad as wet hens because they would be getting their brains beat out trying to pass-protect for me, only to have me drop back, wait, maybe, two or three seconds, then take off like a scared rabbit. My only saving grace was that I almost always made big gains when I'd run, so their irritation was somewhat muted. Still, my shortcoming became painfully evident when we got to the finals.

We played the Sigma Chi fraternity for the championship. Their starting seven on offense had two guys who had been all-CIF in high school from California, three guys who had been all state from Arizona,[9] and two guys who played on ASU's baseball team—a team that happened to win the national championship that year. In short, they were an awesome team and we didn't stand a chance.

It wasn't the last time we met the Sigma Chis in the finals, though. We played them the next year. We were up at the end of the first half, but they caught us during the second half and beat us by fourteen.[10]

The third year was the *first* year we played them with a real, live quarterback, which is to say *someone other than me*. His name was Tim Bray and along with being a good qb, he had the distinction of being one of the most genuinely nice guys in the fraternity (he is also the individual who recently helped with some of the old photos you'll be seeing).[11] I fi-

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[8] I think I butchered his name--my apologies if he's out there and ever reads this.

[9] In fact, their middle linebacker was a very quick giant who was supposed to play for ASU but didn't because he didn't like the coach.

[10] It had rained cats and dogs for several days, and because the soil was somewhat clay-like, traction had gone completely out the window. It was a lot like trying to run on ice.

[11] Funny story about Tim. He WAS a thoroughly nice guy, but being in the fraternity was a bit hard on him in subtle ways. That became evident when he went home for Christmas

nally got to play wide receiver—the position I was born to—and we beat the Sigma Chis without much trouble (though that wouldn't have been the case that first year).[12]

The fourth year, Tim had graduated and I was back at quarterback. I managed to pull both hamstrings early on, so just as had been the case in my senior year of high school, it was all downhill from there.[13]

Football wasn't everything. There were other intramural sports to enjoy. I ran cross country the first year (2.6 miles through the Arizona desert), primarily because they needed one more person to fill out the squad. It was my first cross country race ever and I hated it, but I came in 13th out of 150 guys, so I was kind of a hero back at the house that night.

The next year they forced me into doing it again. I passed out halfway through the race because I had, unbeknownst to me, mononucleosis at the time. I was wiped out for weeks afterwards.[14]

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as a pledge and, at Christmas dinner in front of his entire family, said, "Pass the fucking potatoes." He spent the rest of his time in the fraternity having dinner at the front table with Corky, our House Mother, where such language was verboten. Tim is now an orthopedic surgeon.

12 It was somewhere around this time that our center switched from Sleeper to a big cowboy from Bisbee, Arizona, named Bobby Ryan. He and his brother, Charlie, both pledged a few years into my stay (Charlie first, then Bobby). Bobby went on to become a rodeo champion at some point. He was also the guy who, with friends, went down to Nogales one Easter Break (Nogales is a town in Mexico just below the Arizona border) and got into a bar fight. When school resumed and he was back at the house, he confided, "You know when they hit a guy with a bottle in the movies and the bottle breaks? It doesn't work like that. I must have hit that guy five or six times with a beer bottle and it never even cracked!"

13 That was the year I had the thrill of guarding Bobby Valentine (he was a Sigma Chi at the time). For you non-baseball fans, he later played baseball for the Dodgers, then Angels, then Mets and then the Mariners. When his playing career ended, he became the manager of the Mets, the Texas Rangers and the Boston Red Sox. My guarding him in our intramural football game was a bit of a joke as at the time he could run the hundred-yard dash in 9.5 seconds, only two tenth of a second off *the world record*. It's hard to believe that a human being can accelerate as fast as he did. It was a trip just watching him warm up. Oh, and I did OK with him. He only burned me once, though I regularly started the play ten yards off the line of scrimmage trotting backwards.

14 The doctor at ASU's Health Center who identified the low white blood count associated with my malaise didn't want to speculate about what the problem might be. I wheedled him into conjecturing. He was afraid it might be leukemia (this must have been tough on him as I found out later his son had died of leukemia). That wasn't what I had, but because I'd been so pushy I think I managed to tag myself in his eyes as a pain-in-the-ass. The next time I went in it was for warts. I had twenty-two spread out over my hands and feet with one huge one in the webbing between my thumb and index finger. He tried to burn the largest of them off my hand, but as the smoke was rising and the pain increasing, I decided

I regularly played softball. One year I played badminton. And every year I was there, I participated in the events that would lead to becoming a member of the honorary athletic fraternity Sigma Delta Psi.[15] To say the least, I was fully engaged in the athletic life of my fraternity (along with everything else the fraternity had to offer).[16]

Alpha Tau Omega sweeps A league in football competition

The men of Alpha Tau Omega engage in varied activities of campus and community life. Keeping with tradition, the ATO's finished high among the campus academic leaders. In intramurals, ATO swept the A league football championship from other strong contenders.

As a civic undertaking the men of ATO donated 1,200 man-hours to the needy families of Phoenix. This effort was a major factor in the success of the Inner City Project. In addition member of the fraternity participated in the Big Brothers of America Program.

FAR LEFT: The ATO intramural gre give their cheering Maltesians something yell about as they win the football intramu with the expert help of coach John Ren *LEFT*: Members of Alpha Tau Omega their adopted "little brothers" get to before going to a ball game. They see boys three to five times a month.

nope, just stood up and said, "I'm going to think about this some more," and I left him sitting there. Again, not something I think he appreciated. So when I was having constipation (I hadn't had a bowel movement in three days) and went in for relief, he came out into the waiting room to tell me I needed an enema. My reaction was, "Isn't there something else you could do," to which he exploded (in front of, maybe, twenty people sitting in the waiting room with me) saying, "I DON'T CARE. IF YOU DON'T WANT AN ENEMA, FINE, DON'T HAVE AN ENEMA!" I was mortified, but he had obviously had it with me. In retrospect, it was pretty funny. Also, if you ever find yourself with warts, Mike's mom, who was a Registered Nurse, told me to soak the warts in (of all things) Mr. Clean (this was later during summer break). I spent a month sitting in front of the TV at night with my hands and feet in a pan of Mr. Clean before I decided it wasn't working, except it did. Two months later they were all gone. Let's hear it for modern medicine.

[15] Upon completion of the Sigma Delta Psi events, one's fraternity got points toward the overall intramural sports award given at the end of the year (we won that the first year I was there). Aside from the award, though, it was fun to do. A few of the events were running a hundred-yard dash under 11.5 seconds, throwing a softball 250 feet, running a mile under six minutes, climbing a twenty-foot rope from a seated position in under 12 seconds without using your feet, doing a handstand for 10 seconds, doing a five-foot fence vault, swimming 100 meters in I don't remember how many seconds, etc. As I said, it was fun and always a chuckle watching bleary eyed, beer bellied frat guys trying to run a mile under six minutes at 9 am on a Saturday morning.

[16] Tim found this newspaper article (see photo) about the fraternity's involvement in the Phoenix Big Brother program. I'm squatting in the center; Tim is squatting far left. Interesting notes: His roommate, John Lewis, is behind him to the left. He became a fighter

Toward the end of my first year, everything was wonderful. I was an active. I had a very pretty, very petite, very well-endowed girlfriend, and I can distinctly remember sitting in one of my lecture classes as the thought passed through my head, "This is great. My life for the next four years is set. What could possibly go wrong?"

The next day, my girlfriend hit me with the two words that can rock a guy's world, especially if he is an unthinking nineteen-year-old numbskull. She said, "I'm late."

If there is one thing that can totally change your view of the world, it's believing your girlfriend is pregnant. All of a sudden, no more school, no more parties, no more football in the afternoon, just GET A JOB AND SUPPORT YOUR FAMILY.

Yikes. I was terrified for about a week until, as she put it, her grandmother came to visit.[17] From there on out, I had a very real appreciation for the expression, "Keep smiling, life could be worse."

Looking back at the time I spent in the fraternity, I can see a good side and a bad side to the experience. I needed a social outlet when I was in college, something to belong to, and I needed an avenue through which I could continue to do athletics. The fraternity did a nice job on both of those fronts. It was also nice to have people to do things with, and there were a few guys I got to know well who became good friends.

On the other hand, our fraternity housed a lot of guys with serious drinking problems, and at least a few of them were real thugs.[18] In a nutshell, there were some but not a lot of guys there I would want to know and hang out with now . . . though that shouldn't be surprising as I'm not the person now that I was then.

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pilot in Vietnam, then came home and died in a crop-dusting plane accident. To the far right is a guy named Sleeper who was from Illinois. Everyone called him *hog jowls,* which he didn't much like. That, until he went to California with one of the guys for an Easter break, fell in love with surfing and became *the surf hog*. He was a good fellow and for my first few years, was center on our football team. I don't remember the names of the rest of the guys in the photo.

17 She had to then explain to me that that meant her period had started. Who'd a thunk?

18 I remember nearly getting myself clobbered by Dahl, one of our more thuggish active, one night during a line-up when I tried to get him to stop slamming a pledge against a wall. Dahl was drunk, which didn't help, but he was a big guy who had, I'm sure, been a bully when in high school, and he didn't like being told *no*. That kind of thing didn't happen often, but it did happen.

As for the pledge system, it was often little more than mindless, destructive hazing. Instead of doing things that would make a pledge into a good active, the system was designed to make a pledge into a good, subservient pledge. There was no thoughtfulness around the experience. It was, in other words, dumb. Unfortunately, as a tradition it was almost impossible to change.

And one more bit of amusement: The fraternity I ended up in was pretty much *the* animal house on campus. Other fraternities sneeringly referred to us as *the pits*, as in *the armpits*, but we didn't care. We had good athletes and we had awesome "social events." Even the high browed Kappas and very proper Chi Omegas vied to go to our parties because, frankly, they rocked. We weren't exactly the guys one brought home to mom, but we *were* a lot of fun to be around on a Saturday night. (More about that in *Part 2* of the College Days chapters.)

There was a snag, though, that really wasn't our fault but definitely did us in. The academic program I was involved in required five years to complete. During my fourth year, we had a very large pledge class consisting mainly of kids from Southern California. Under normal circumstances, this would have been great. Unfortunately, the times they were a-changing.

When I got to ASU, the drug of choice was alcohol. With these new recruits, the drug of choice was marijuana. We in the fraternity had no idea that this was the case until later in the year. But as a consequence of the new lifestyle, few of the kids made it through the pledge program (they were, we found, a very mellow crew).

We had a 55-man house that had to be filled to the 49-man mark for us to break even. With so many pledges dropping out, we fell dangerous short in a financial sense. The pledge class during my last year there was almost a mirror image of the previous year, so by the end of that year, only two years in the running, the house went from robust to bust and the fraternity was forced to close its doors.

As seemed to be the norm, though, we set the standard. It was thirty years later when I next drove down fraternity row at ASU, and by that point in time the place had all but been razed.

There's nothing like being a trendsetter.

Chapter 4

The College Years -Part 2-

The academic side of my stay at ASU was very enjoyable, but because I still had learning quirks it didn't come easy. The Electrical Engineering department was peppered with people who had been playing with electricity and electronics all their lives (many were engineers from the Motorola factory and offices located in the Phoenix area), so I had plenty of people around me to ask questions of, but also plenty of opportunities to feel seriously outgunned. The professors were knowledgeable and helpful, but as is probably the case all over at the college level, they were geared for self-starters, not for kids with learning disabilities. I spent hours and hours studying with little to show for it grade-wise. I thoroughly enjoyed what I was doing, but it was a struggle.

My all-time favorite class was Electromechanics. It was a course in which electrical theory and differential equations were used to solve problems associated with mechanical systems. We would take a mechanical system, model the physical characteristics of the system as differential equations, then use op-amps and voltage sources to build a physical electrical circuit that would model the differential equations. Once the electrical circuit was built, we would use an *analog computer* as a time-dependent voltage sensor to determine the output of the circuit when it was run. From that, we could deduce what would happen to the modeled mechanical system over time.

It was complicated, and I wasn't very good at it, but I still found it fun.

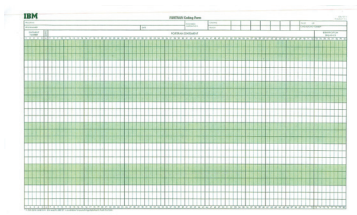
As an interesting side-note, the down side of the electromechanics class was not obvious to anyone but me. It was nevertheless a beaut and worth mentioning.

The afternoon class met on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:40 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. In and of itself, that wouldn't have been such a big deal. It wasn't as though the class's timing kept me from anything important, like my afternoon sports activities. No, sir, that wasn't the problem.

The problem was that I took the class during a semester when my girlfriend and I were feeling particularly frisky in a sexual sense. So after classes every day, I would pick her up at her dorm and we would make the ten minute drive out to my dad's house to screw like bunnies for a couple of hours before he got home. What that meant was that around 2 p.m. every weekday, no matter what I was doing, I'd glaze over thinking about all of the good things I was going to be doing to my girlfriend in about an hour.

Put a little differently, after 2 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays when I was supposed to be absorbing electromechanics like a sponge, I wouldn't be hearing a word the professor was saying.

Life could have been worse, but not as far as my academics were concerned.



But I digress. I enjoyed computer programming even though it was a physically taxing experience, literally. We used these huge pads of special computer paper (note the exhibit to the left) to write out our programs in Fortran 2—probably the most archaic, unforgiving computer programming language ever devised. Once done, I'd run over to *computer building #1* to punch out the computer cards I needed (again, look to the left), one *for each line of the program*, to input my program into the school's computer.

Even though the school's computer filled a room the size of an auditorium, it had less memory than a modern, hand-held *TI 85* calculator. Pretty pathetic if you think about it, but it was state of the art at the time and we considered ourselves lucky and pretty cool to have it.

So once the cards were punched, I'd run over to *computer building #2* where the computer itself was housed. I'd hand my stack of cards over to a guy on the other side of the counter so my program *could* be run. If I was lucky, I'd get my results back 24-hours later.[1] If I wasn't lucky, I'd get a gigantic sheet of paper on which was printed, line for line, my program along with a detailed listing of all the run-errors I'd made. I'd have to sprint back to *computer building # 1* to retype the messed-up cards to fix the errors, reinsert the cards into the stack, run back to *computer building #2* to re-

[1] For those of you out there who get miffed at the slowness of your home p.c., you have no idea how good you have it.

submit the stack, then wait another 24-hours for the results hoping against hope that I hadn't made additional errors while doing the corrections.

Enough said. You get the point . . .

Science labs typically took three hours during a single afternoon, then hours and hours of more time doing the write-ups. Regular classes, which were separate classes and often took less time on the homework side, were worth four or five semester units. A lab class was worth *one* lousy unit. It was a miserable deal, but we had no choice.

ROTC was required during the freshman and sophomore years primarily, I think, because it gave the upper-class ROTC folks—individuals who *wanted* to be in the program—people to order around. It was also during the Vietnam War, so the school probably got some kind of financial incentive to have the program. I signed up for the Air Force ROTC because it sounded more refined than the Army ROTC. That meant I had to wear an Air Force uniform to class on Thursdays because I and my fellow conscripts had to march out on "the field" on Thursday mornings at 7 a.m.

During my first semester in the classroom part of the course, the instructor was a complete asshole, selecting me out for special bullying whenever he could. At the end of the class, I wrote a scathing indictment of his teaching techniques. A week after classes ended, I went to his office to see how I had done (grades were posted on office doors in those days—remember, no personal computers at the time).

He noticed me there and asked me into his office. He said he had read my critique and found it surprising because, according to him, he had met my dad that summer and he (my dad) had said how gung-ho I was about going on into the ROTC program.

My responses were two-fold.

1.) If you thought I wanted to go into the military, why be such a dick? Why not try to make the program appealing? And:

2.) More to the point, who do you think my dad is?

It turned out that the man he had talked to was, in fact, *not* my dad, he was a building contractor who had the same last name as mine. In other words, I had taken shit from this guy for an entire semester due to a case of mistaken identity.

He apologized. As I was leaving, though, I remember being thankful I still had three and a half years before I might have to deal with guys like him on a regular basis, should I get drafted upon graduation.

The draft was *not* something I even wanted to think about.

The *Intro to Anthropology* and *Intro to Philosophy* courses I signed up for as a freshman were hard because they had so much reading to them (Mrs. Crabapple's long reach extended all the way into college), but at least their tests were fair . . . That couldn't be said of the *Intro to Art* class I took as a freshman.

To begin with, the class's professor didn't bother to tell anyone that the tests would require students to be able to identify slides that had been shown in class but that weren't in the book. I had no idea that to do well I would be expected to make quick, in-class sketches of the slides as they blew by. But that wasn't all.

During one of his lectures, the clod who was teaching the course stated emphatically that prehistoric man NEVER did art for art's sake. So on the test, when a True/False question stated, "Prehistoric man never did art for art's sake," I circled True. The professor took a point off for the answer. When I went to his office to argue, his response was that you can never tell for absolute certain what prehistoric man did or didn't think as it was prehistoric, hence the answer was False. I correctly pointed out that that contradicted what he said in class, but he wouldn't budge. I let it slide because I figured it wasn't that big a deal. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a *very* big deal. At the end of the semester, I was ONE POINT below the C minus cut-off and the son-of-a-bitch gave me D++ for a grade in the class . . . like the university kept track of minutia like ++'s. I didn't run into that kind of shit often, but there were professors out there who really did have their head up their ass.

Fortunately, I got an "A" in the math class I took that semester, which was a wonder as I never went to class,[2] so my net GPA was high enough

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[2] The class was at 7:40 AM, which was a horrible time for any college student to be up, so I only showed occasionally, just to see what they were doing. I remember arriving one morning after having missed a few weeks and noticing that everyone was feverishly thumbing through notes, etc. I asked what the deal was and found that there was a test that day. I got up, walked out the door and passed the professor in the hallway on the way out. Fortunately, the guy was a good fellow, so when I went to his office later and explained I'd been put in the wrong class and pretty much knew everything he was teaching, he was kind enough to let me take the test late . . . thank God. Not EVERY professor was a jackass.

One other thing I should probably mention somewhere, so why not here? Nobody told me when I was in high school that there would come a time (like, when I went to college) when I would be completely on my own and completely free to do whatever I wanted whenever I wanted (when I talk to my stude4nts about this, I point out that if they go to college on the east coast, in the beginning there won't be a single person, with the possible exception of their roommate, who will give a flying damn whether they live or die . . . and

to allow me to transit from being a pledge to being an active in the fraternity. If that hadn't worked out, I'm not sure what I'd have done as being a pledge for a second semester would have really sucked.

Anyway, though it had nothing to do with pledging, after that first semester I switched to engineering, a move that presented its own little amusements and challenges.

Arizona State University was set up on the same standard, sixteen week, semester-long course template that exists today in many universities. The Electrical Engineering department was set up with homework and the occasional quiz, but most of your grade came from two exams, a midterm and a final.

The bright souls running the engineering department did not help matters at all when it came to those two tests. How so? It was common for every professor in the department to give his or her mid-term during the same week ON THE SAME DAY. You'd go in to take the mid-term for your 7:40 a.m. Tuesday/Thursday class on, say, a Tuesday. When you were done at 8:30, you'd turn it in, step out into the hallway, breathe deeply four or five times, then go and take the mid-term for your 8:40 class. When that was done at 9:30, you'd turn *it* in, step out into the hallway for some more deep breathing, then go and take the mid-term for your 10:40 class.

They happened boom, boom, boom, one right after another. Then the *next* day, the same thing would happen again for your Monday/Wednesday/Friday classes.

I would start studying WEEKS before those tests were scheduled because I had no choice. And I was so busy during those periods, I used an hourly calendar and I'd practically schedule *bathroom breaks* onto it. It was exhilarating, but it was also terrifying.

IT WILL BE WONDERFUL!). Nobody told me any of this. Consequences? I had no idea I'd have to decide when I'd wash my clothes, *if* I washed my clothes; that I'd have to decide when I'd study, *if* I'd study; that I'd have to decide when I'd party, *if* I'd party (well, OK, so that was a given, but still); that I'd have to decide when I'd go to class, *if* I went to class.

That last one almost did me in during the first month I was at ASU. Idiot that I was, I'd scheduled a 7:40 AM class (that math class) and an 8:40 AM class. I went to neither more than three or four times that first month because there was nobody around to TELL me to go to class, so I'd just sleep in. What finally snapped me out of the idiocy? I had to go to campus early one the morning and found GIRLS walking around, being social, doing things. That was when I realized I was sleeping a quarter of my college experience away. Really dumb!

What's more, the tests themselves were a horror. I remember taking an engineering class from a guy who couldn't have stood more than four-foot, ten. Because he was itty-bitty, he had been 4F during WWII and had ended up working as an aviation engineer building Air Force fighters for Boeing.

His midterm and final each had a total of two problems on them, and they were *all or nothing*. That's right, if you made *any error at all* in coming to the bottom line, you got the entire problem wrong.[3] It meant your possible scores would be 100%, 50% or 0%.

So it's the midterm and I'm sitting in his class taking the test with every neuron in my brain at attention, and he is walking around looking to see what people are doing. At one point, I realize he has stopped behind me and is looking over my shoulder (this, I might add, puts his face just a little bit above shoulder level *as I'm seated*). And as he begins to walk away, I hear, "Tsch, tsch, tsch!"

"OH MY GOD," I'm thinking.

I immediately go scurrying back up through what I'd written and, sure enough, about four lines above where I was I find I'd dropped a negative sign. The man saves me 50% on his test by letting me know I'd done something stupid.

He was tough, but at least he had a heart.

On a little different note, just because I was in college didn't mean I had shed that overpowering urge to be the center of attention in the classroom. That problem was still with me.

I remember one math class on *Differential Equations* that I had to take for my major. It was taught by a very prim, very exacting, very Germanic woman professor. I sat in the back with a guy who was a lineman on ASU's football team and who had been at Annapolis for his first two years of college (he had the most amazing knack of sitting bolt upright looking straight toward the front of the room, *dead asleep*, while his pen moved on his notebook paper as though he was taking notes).

When he wasn't snoozing, the two of us would keep busy making

[3] This is not an altogether unreasonable thing to demand. When they got the math wrong on the mirror of the Hubble telescope, for instance (the grinding of the mirror was off by 1.3 millimeters), they got spherical aberration (the incoming light didn't all focus on the same point) which wasn't evident until they got the Hubble into space. NASA had to spend an additional $1.5 billion to send astronauts up to fix the problem (they effectively put glasses on the telescope). I suspect our professor was trying to drive home the point that in the real world, the math matters . . .

off-handed remarks that kept the back row folks in stitches. The poor professor wasn't used to having attention-diverting jerks in her class, so our presence was neither something she relished nor something she was experienced in handling. In fact, this was the *second time* I had taken a class from her. To say the least, I was not one of her favorite pupils.

At the end of the course, she offered a final exam for anyone who felt they needed to raise their grade. I, unfortunately, had only 55% of the points in the class, so I definitely needed to do something with a final. I showed up at her office at the appointed hour, the *only person* in the entire class to do so.

Realizing I was the only one, she made me an offer I couldn't refuse. She said she would give me a *C* in the class without my having to take a final if I would promise to never take a class from her again. I was done with the math curriculum at that point and hadn't intended to darken her doorstep again, anyway, so I said *sure*. That was it. I got my *C* and she got the peace of mind to know that she would never, ever see me again.

Antics like that aside, I really did like participating in the educational process. I wasn't very good at it, but I genuinely enjoyed it. I often wished I had been better at it. Then, again, if I had been—if my innate smarts, such as they were, had not been trumped by my innate learning disabilities—I'd have probably gotten a PhD in something and never would have ended up at Poly . . .

Dating at ASU, especially during the first few months of school, was wrapped up around ASU football. You *had* to have a date for *the game*.[4] If you didn't have a girlfriend or anyone you were really interested in, the trick was to get a blind date. That usually came in the form of a set-up by one of the sorority girls who was going out with a guy in the house, though if you were lucky you might score a date with someone in one of your classes. I did both, on and off, for the first year.

Unfortunately, due to my inexperience and complete cluelessness with respect to the fairer sex, and probably due to the fact that I was insecure and subconsciously felt vulnerable, I got it into my head that I wasn't going to take any shit from *any* woman. The consequence of this was that whenever a date gave me a hard time about anything, I'd verbally cut her to size, then unceremoniously dump her.

THIS WAS A VERY BAD IDEA. By the end of the first year, I'd

[4] In fact, my fraternity usually had a party after each home game, so having a date was *really* important.

managed to get myself blackballed on at least one whole floor of Palo Verde East[5] and had managed to make the name "Craig Fletcher" a *must miss* proposition for a decent number of the girls on campus.

By the time I got back to school for my sophomore year, I'd thought about this during the summer and had decided I wasn't going to give anyone a bad time about anything. I focused instead on making sure that my dates had a fun time when out with me, and it seemed to work. I still had the occasional flare-up of temper, but on the whole I was more jovial and easy going that second year. There was one incident, though, in which I slipped in a rather spectacular, if not justifiable way.

About a month or so into the school year, the sorority system at ASU had what they called *Pledge Presents*. It always happened on a Friday night. I never went to it, but it was a presentation of the girls who had been accepted into the various sororities.

In my sophomore year, on the night of *Pledge Presents*, I had a blind date with a Chi Omega pledge for after the ceremony. I don't remember her name. Let's call her Pam for the sake of ease.

As was customary for the time, I made a Coke date with her (Coca Cola, not cocaine, you goof) on the Thursday night before the formal date, just to get acquainted. What was weird was that on Monday night of that week, Pam's roommate called me with an unusual request. It seemed that Pam's parents were coming into town on Friday to attend Pledge Presents. They wanted to take her out after the event, but they also wanted their arrival to be a surprise. They knew she had a date so, according to the roommate, they wanted the roommate to call me and ask me to break the date so Pam would be free.

Being a normal guy, I wasn't happy about losing out on a date, but I said I'd go along with the plan and I'd make the break after the Coke date.

Thursday's meeting was supposed to take place at 7:30 p.m. I called the girl's dorm that night around 7:20 p.m., just to make sure we were still *on*. I have no idea how it happened, but somehow the phone lines got crossed and I found myself listening in on a phone conversation between Pam and one of her girlfriends.[6]

The conversation went something like this:

Girlfriend: "Ready for this weekend?"

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[5] Palo Verde was an eight floor (give or take) girls' dorm on campus that was fairly near fraternity row.

[6] Really, this was the only time during my five years at ASU that this happened—it was truly bizarre.

Pam: "You bet."

Girlfriend: "OK, here's what we are going to do. As soon as Pledge Presents is over, we race back to the dorm, change clothes, get our bags, motor down to Phoenix International Airport and catch our flight to LA. The guys will pick us up at the airport and take us to our hotel. The next day, we'll go to the USC football game, party all night, catch a flight back on Sunday afternoon and be back by early evening. What do you think?"

Pam: "Sounds great. Talk to you later."

Girlfriend: "OK, bye."

It appeared as though I had been manipulated . . . by a woman . . . something I didn't have a long history of taking well. To say that my blood was up would be an understatement. But I was cool. I didn't blow. No sir, not me.

I proceeded down to the kitchen. I found the enormous jar of powdered garlic the cook used. I filled an eight-ounce drinking glass about a quarter full with the white powder and added warm water to dissolve the mess. I stirred. Once thoroughly mixed, I took a huge mouthful and gargled. I did this gargling routine for about five minutes, just to be sure I was thoroughly imbued with the essence of the nectar. I also inadvertently swallowed a fair amount of the concoction in the process.

When I was done, you could smell garlic on me from about five feet away. I went back up to my room and borrowed a pair of my roommate's pants. He was shorter than I, so they looked really geeky—high water specials with the cuffs about four inches above my ankles. I put on a loudly colored shirt and some beat-up tennis shoes. I combed my hair funny and placed a piece of green stuff from the kitchen—I think it was parsley—between two teeth so that it looked like it had gotten stuck there from dinner. I was 20 minutes late, but once set I went to pick up my date.

We went to *Bob's Big Boy* in Scottsdale. I told her I didn't have enough money for two cokes, so we'd have to share one. I ordered one Coke and two straws. Every time she'd go in for a slurp, I'd go in too, breathing mightily at her as I did.

I sounded as much like a nerd as I possible could, acted awkward and socially inept, laughed way too loudly at my very unfunny, sexually inappropriate jokes, and generally did everything I could to embarrass her as I played *the date from hell*. I stretched the outing to last about forty-five minutes.

When we got back to the dorm, I shook her hand. I thought about

going in for a kiss but didn't. Instead, I said I'd see her Friday night, then turned on my heels and left her standing there like a lump at the door.

When I got back to the fraternity house, I called the girl who set me up, explained what the pledge had done and thanked her for hooking me up with "that miserable, cock sucking bitch."[7] I then slammed down the phone for effect. It was a lousy thing to do to the gal as it wasn't her fault, but I was in *insensitive asshole* mood and that was what one did when one was pissed off.

About four months later at a block party on fraternity row, Pam approached me and apologized. I said it was OK, and that was the last time I ever saw her.

The affair wasn't forgotten, though. About three years later, I had another blind date with a Chi O. She was, I found, a very sweet, VERY pretty, very VERY nicely put together young female. What was surprising about the date, aside from the fact that she was a bit of a nymphomaniac, was that the first thing she said when she got into the car was that she had heard all about me and she just wanted to let me know that she wasn't going to do anything that might irritate me.

I was surprised and asked her to elaborate. She said that I had become a kind of legend in her sorority for the way I had dealt with that earlier situation. What passed through my mind as we drove off for our date was, "Just think, a legend in my own time. It doesn't get much better than that . . . "

As I said, my fraternity had parties on Saturday nights about every other weekend. During football season, they were usually attached to home games, but not always. The drill was simple. We would rent a place somewhere in the Scottsdale or Phoenix area, hire a band, and have a ball.

Although we were viewed very much as a kind of *animal house* like fraternity (I realize I'm repeating myself, but it kind of bears repeating), our parties were such a blast that sorority girls vied to be invited to them. The dancing was brah,[8] and half way through the proceeding the guys and their dates would all join arms in a gigantic circle and sing songs.

In an effort to give a true and complete chronicling of my journey through school as a "frat boy," I have to write out the words to at least a few of my favorites songs.

My *most* favorite was about a little brown mouse. It went:

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[7] Apologies for the language, but I *am* being historically accurate here.

[8] A little of my Scottish heritage peeking through . . .

Oh, the liquor was spilled on the bar room floor,
And the bar was closed for the night.
When out of the corner came the little brown mouse,
And he sat in the pale moonlight.

He lapped up the liquor on the bar room floor,
And back on his haunches he sat,
And all through the night you could hear him roar,
BRING ON THE GOD DAMN CAT.

The next one was around long before I arrived on the scene. I know this because I used to hear one of the more elderly teachers at Poly, Stan Scheinkopf, singing it at Poly on occasion.[9] The song was long, so I'll just give a few stanzas.

Oh they had to carry Harry to the ferry.
Oh they had to carry Harry to shore.
And the reason that they had to carry Harry to the ferry
Was that Harry couldn't carry any more.

California, California,
We're here to do or die,
Or know the reason why.
California, California,
We'll win the game or know the reason why.

And when the game is over,
We will buy a keg of booze,
And drink to California
Till we wobble in our shoes . . . etc.

There were two other songs I liked. Verses from each are:

Oh, there are no ATO's down in hell,
(Hell, no!).

[9] Note: In the song, there are places where each singer is supposed to insert the name of his or her home state, so when you see the word "California" in my transcription, know that every state in the union was being bellowed out by the singers at that time.

Oh, there are no ATO's down in hell.
They're in heaven up above,
Drinking beer and making love,
Oh, there are no ATO's down in hell.

And:

Oh, we drink to girls who do,
And we drink to girls who don't,
But not the girls who say they will
And then they say they won't.
The girls we toast from break of day
Till wee small hours of night,
Are those who say they never have,
But just for you they might.

Most of the original fraternities in the countries were started in the South. As a consequence, they had strong Christian leanings. You couldn't tell this, of course, by the way fraternity guys have acted down through the ages, but you could hear echoes of it in my fraternity in the grace we sang before meals. It went:

Lord of man-kind,
Mas-ter di-vine,
Give us peace,
In heart and mind.

So we may know thee,
Thy presence show.
Guide us and guard us
In A-T-O.

So much for the songs . . .

The regular parties were great, but there were two very special parties that occurred during the year, the spring and winter formals.

Interestingly, I only remember one winter formal, and it only vaguely. We rented a bus and went to a resort area somewhere in mountains where there was snow. It was, as usual, an all-night affair and lots of fun. I didn't have a special girl at the time, so I asked a girl from the University of Ar-

izona, which was kind of weird. I managed to get a ticket driving her up from Tucson.

The *spring formals*, that's where we really excelled.

The day part of the spring formal was always held at a pool located at one of the many resorts in the Scottsdale area. The guys would begin arriving around 9 a.m. Upon arrival, their dates would immediately be thrown into the pool—kind of a tradition.

I was never part of the mixing committee, but we had huge, stainless steel milk containers in which was mixed a very potent, combustible, alcoholic concoction that was so wicked that smoking wasn't allowed in its vicinity. Of course, it tasted like punch, but what a kick.

One year I wasn't going out with anyone special, so I agreed to take one of the girls in our auxiliary. She was very pretty, very stacked, and quite smart. She had been the steady of one of the guys, but the two had broken up several months earlier over another girl. I, of course, didn't know that she was still in love with her old beau, so I was moderately surprised to find that she wasn't much interested in staying around me during the day but rather in hanging around him. By the time we were ready to leave, I was furious at being ignored. Under that circumstance, being drunk didn't help.

At the end of the day, the two of us got into my little, green, Austin Healy Sprite, and went beetling down the dirt road toward the main drag. Coming around a corner, I found myself looking at two, poor, unsuspecting, defenseless birds in the roadway (again, being drunk didn't help). Being of not-so-sound mind and even less quick reflex, I swerved to miss the birds and plowed into a twelve-foot-tall Saguaro cactus. I was wearing a seat belt, so I pivoted at the waist and crashed into the steering wheel, hitting the area between my nose and lip.[10] My date didn't have her seat belt on, though, so she went forward and her head cracked my windshield.

According to my roommate, the guys heard the crash and came running. When they arrived, I had reverted to *asshole of the month* form and was yelling at the girl for having broken my windshield.[11] I don't remember doing that, but I was told it happened.

That night at the dinner and dance part of the affair, she was very

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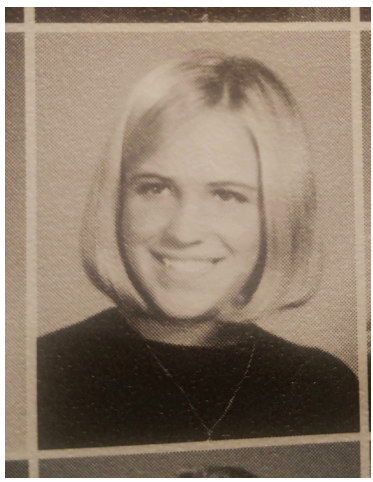
[10] In fact, the first time I ever had a mustache was during the period just after the accident. I couldn't put pressure on the area above my lip for a couple of weeks, so I didn't shave during that time and the mustache just kind of erupted.

[11] If she hadn't given me such an awful time all day, I'd have probably been considerably more thoughtful toward her when crash time came.

aloof and disinterested in me. I had, as was the tradition, made up a liqueur that consisted of bourbon and sugar water. Due to my state of inebriation, just after dinner I spilled the brew onto the tablecloth whereupon I licked up as much as I could, then counted it a loss. She was totally grossed out, but the bros thought it was very funny. In fact, I may have gotten another *asshole of the month* award for that move,[12] though I can't remember for sure.

The gal never did get back together with her old boyfriend. She got into an automobile accident that summer, though, and had to have brain surgery to survive. The incident did something to her appetite and metabolism and she blew up like a zeppelin. What was interesting was that there was a very nice ATO who had graduated several years before me who was short, round as a beach ball, and rich. The two of them got together and found that they had something in common—a huge craving for food. They fell in love and got married. For all I know, they are still eating their way through life, happy as clams.



I met the girl I very nearly married in the middle of my sophomore year. Her name was Jennifer Collette (pictured to the left). She was a Theta, and she and I would date steadily for the next two and a half years. Our first date was a bit exotic. In fact, I talk about it in the Eastern Philosophy book under the guise *it happened to my roommate*.[13] As I did a nice job in that book animating what took place on that first date, I'm reproducing that section, slightly modified, below.

[12] It seems as though I remember writing about this somewhere, but I can't find it so I'll include it here. The *asshole of the month* award was a vaunted award given to the guy in my fraternity who managed to completely outdo everybody else that month in the art of being an asshole. In my defense, I would like to point out that this was the 60's and being an asshole then was not like taking up neo-Nazism, as today's assholes seem to be doing. It was a more benign, good natured, less destructive form of assholeism—truly a different critter than today. Be that as it may, I managed to secure the award several times. This may have been one of them.

[13] Although my students never knew this, at least not for sure, I always set my more exotic personal tales in the cast of *it happened to a friend*.

(From *Eastern Philosophy for Western Minds, A Search for the Jewel in the Lotus*):

> One of my college friends [EDITOR'S NOTE: OK, I was the friend] had a very sexy girlfriend that he dated for a long time. She was sweet, a bit naive maybe, but a lot of fun. Her parents lived relatively close—ten minutes away—to his own home in California. The following was his recollection of their first date.
>
> He asked her to an all-night party being thrown by the fraternity at a movie theater down in Phoenix owned by a fraternity alum. She accepted and they went. The party broke up around 4 a.m. and everyone left to go elsewhere. She wasn't at all suspicious when he suggested that they go to his dad's house, even though she knew his dad was out of town. [EDITOR'S NOTE: College dorms for women in the 1960's had a curfew of 1:30 AM. To go to an all-night party, a girl had to check out for the night which meant she had nowhere to go should the party end early.] When they got there, they talked for a while until the yawns were too much. He said he was going to go up and lie down on a bed upstairs, and that if she was tired also, she could come. The two went up and lay down side by side on the bed. He kissed her a few times which she responded to, then after a short lapse and a tiny bit of groping, he moved to undo her bra. He executed the maneuver deftly, then found to his horror that she had fallen asleep. Being adept at undoing bras but having no experience at re-connecting them, he realized he was in big trouble.[14] What

[14] This footnote was not in the E.Phil book but: This was long, long, long before it was required that a guy get verbal permission from a girl before doing anything that might be construed as sexually aggressive.

Also, as for *being* sexually aggressive: I don't think guys consciously thought about this, but when I was a kid in college there seemed to be a belief that girls had a higher, noble side that wanted to wait until marriage before having sex, and a naughty-side that was just as interested in sex as were the guys. Under normal circumstances, girls didn't let their naughty-side freaky-fly because if they did, society would identify them as a slut (this designation being somewhat pooped on by the sexual revolution of the 1960's) and their reputation would be shot (it was remarkable the number of guys at the time who wanted a virgin

was she going to think when she awoke to find herself undone? He decided the best path of action was to bite the bullet and face the proverbial music. He gave her a hard nudge to wake her up, then said he'd be downstairs if she wanted to talk. He got up and went to the living room to await his fate.

When she came down, he immediately apologized. She said she had never run into anything like that in Illinois, which sort of stopped him. He said, "I thought you were a California girl." She said, "No, my parents just moved to California." He said, "Oh, jeez, I thought you were a California girl. California girls are really fast. If I'd known you weren't from California, I'd have never pulled that stunt."

It was, of course, complete bullshit, but any port in a storm. She was indignant but willing to continue to talk. The evening (morning) ended with conversation.

That was their first date.

(Two years later, they were engaged to be married. It was around that time that she told him that she'd

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for a girlfriend or bride—we even had a guy in our house who started going steady with the roommate of my girlfriend, a catch who was super cute, SMOKING HOT, a sweetheart and someone who really liked the guy, but he broke it off with her when he found out she's had sex with her previous boyfriend, a fellow she had been dating *for three years* . . . apparently, insanely, my fraternity brother expected her to have said "no" to the old boyfriend while they were dating but "yes" to him).

The point is that as far as guys were concerned, girls, in the deepest recesses of their minds, wanted to experience sex as much as did the guys. So if a girl got drunk and her inhibitions fell and she ended up having sex, which she really wanted to do all along, what would be the harm? (Actually, the harm was that when she sobered up and the noble side took over, it/she looked back at what she'd done and was ashamed of herself . . . but guys weren't thinking about stuff like that).

I kind of accepted all of this, but I didn't act on it. I had, instead, two self-imposed rules that were completely my own. The first was that I would never sleep with a girl who was drunk. My reasoning was that if a girl was sober and wanted to have sex with me, that might be OK (see the second rule), but if she was sober and didn't want to have sex with me (like, maybe, after the third or fourth date), then nuts to her. People act differently when drunk, so knowing a girl's real feelings when drunk was impossible, hence, no sleeping with drunk girls (this, I might add, was long before having sex with an inebriated female was grounds for a rape charge). The second was that I wouldn't sleep with anyone I didn't *like* enough to marry should I get her pregnant, though this was nowhere close to as noble as it sounds as at the time I had a pretty sophomoric definition for the word "like."

found their first-night's experience strangely exciting. Having been brought up in a very strait-laced family around school-chums who had never made advances toward her, she really didn't think of herself as being sexually desirable. The fact that he had even tried both surprised and titillated her.)

My friend was a normal, healthy, red-blooded male whose hormones were running like Appaloosas. There were things about her he wasn't crazy about, but she was pretty and unintentionally sexy, and she seemed to be interested in him. As such, he asked her out again and she accepted. Touched off by that first night, their sexual experimentation (she was a virgin, he wasn't) was accelerated. Within two months they were sleeping together.[15]

From there on, sex was a very big part of their relationship, even to the detriment of their studies.

[EDITOR'S NOTE not found in the E.Phil book: For those of you who are quick, you will have already deduced that this female was the distraction that nearly got me flunked out of my Electromechanical Systems class.]

I watched the two for the entire time they dated, and although they appeared on the surface to be OK with one another, it was really a very sad situation. Almost without exception, the only time those two were happy together was when they were in bed with one another. They clearly had nothing in common; they were constantly arguing; they basically made each other miserable, and they did it for about two-and-a-half years.

What kept them together? The sexual interaction between the two had been quite intense almost from the start, so instead of realizing in fairly short order that they didn't have a thing in common and really should break up, they stayed together for over two years. They both obviously wanted to have somebody to love and possibly marry and hopefully be happy with, but in

[15] This was actually pretty amazing. I found out later that her mother had told her that if she EVER had sex, she would absolutely for-sure become pregnant. Nice parenting, mom.

staying together they completely negated the possibility of actually finding someone to whom they might have been better suited.

The moral of the story? This is *not* a situation you want to emulate when you get to college.

This was clearly a cautionary tale for my college bound seniors, but the excerpt from the E.Phil book doesn't really do the experience justice. There were times when the two of us genuinely enjoyed each other's company. The problem was that I was very possessive, very jealous, and very self-involved.[16] I didn't have the maturity to deal with another human being on such an intimate level, and even if I had been smoother in my dealings with her, my self-preferment would inevitably have made her life miserable in the long run. I was not meant to be married. Life most definitely had other plans for me.

There is one other thing I want to mention before moving on. Aside from Tim, who went on to become an orthopedic surgeon, the only guy I have kept up with from my fraternity days has been my junior year roommate, Jim Feltham.

Jim was an interesting guy. He was not a jock, but he was a good cross-country runner. He was kind of a shy violet during high school, but he had a succession of good relationships with very fine women during and after college. He was a studious bookworm. He got good grades.

Jim was also a joiner. When at ASU, he was on the Interfraternity Council and was their Pledge Chairman for three years. In fact, his presence on the council helped keep our fraternity out of hot water on several occasion. He was also the chairman of the university's Homecoming Committee in his senior year. This was a huge honor because, among other things, it allowed him to rub elbows with people like the President

16 One of the consequences of the rather unusual way my life has turned out was that thirty or so years ago in a moment of complete insanity, I dumped the one and only picture I had of Jennifer while we were together at ASU. She was a Theta, and the picture was something I'd kill to have now because it was taken at a party where we were dancing, she looking quite fine and me looking mad as hell. The photo perfectly framed our relationship, complete with me acting like a total ass. After starting the autobio fifteen to twenty years ago (and after kicking myself repeatedly), I more or less gave up having any likeness of her in the book until Tim Bray came to the rescue . . . so *thank you, Tim*. (And in looking at the picture, I am reminded of something I had completely forgotten about--that she was quite pretty.)

of the University.

The two of us weren't perfectly matched. I would drink Coke and eat Taco Flavored Tortilla Chips when I studied, which meant the room constantly reeked. To this day, Jim claims that he gets nauseous when someone opens a bag of them and he gets a sniff. And my study habits were quite different from his. He would study after dinner, then go to bed around 10 p.m. I would go to dinner, go out and do things, then study till 1 a.m. Out of self-preservation, he got in the habit of sleeping with his head between two pillows. To this day, he evidently still does that.[17]

Still, we had good times together, talking about girls, partying, generally cutting up.

I never thought of Jim as being ambitious, but he had a very definite feel for what he wanted to do in life. He was going to get a law degree, become an interned at the County Prosecutor's Office, then after several years he intended to go through the Police Academy to supplement his understanding of both the law and law enforcement. At least, that was the direction he was aiming at for when he got out of law school.

He did become a lawyer but, in fact, stuff happened along the way and he ended up being the *Administrative Assistant* to John Rhodes, Congressman from Arizona and the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives in Washington, DC.[18]

I like to think that his success in the world of big-time politics was at least partially bolstered by myself.

Enter the incident of *the sign*.

At one point in my college career, I realized that all I was thinking about on the academic side was getting good grades. I had completely lost track of the fact that learning was supposed to be fun. Realizing this, I made a poster-like sign to remind myself of the relative *unimportance* of grades, and of the *importance* of enjoying learning for its own sake.

I intended to put the sign up over the door in my room so that every time I'd leave for class, it would be there to remind me. Unfortunately, I couldn't put it on my side of the room because there was an air conditioning duct in the way. So with Jim's permission, I put it over the door on his side of the room.

About two weeks later, everyone in the fraternity was busy cleaning

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[17] He told me his wife found this tendency very peculiar when they first began sleeping with one another.

[18] Pretty impressive, given the fact that over the entire two-hundred-and-thirty-year history of the United States, there couldn't be more than fifty individuals who have held that post.

their room because the President of the University was going to be having dinner with us (this was due to Jim being the chair of the Homecoming Committee). Afterward, the President was going to inspect the house.

I don't remember why, but I wasn't there for the festivities. Nevertheless, after dinner the President made a beeline for the room of the one person he actually knew in the fraternity, which is to say *Jim's room*. Jim was right behind him, thinking all was well.

According to Jim, the President walked into the room, looked around, commented on how nice the room looked, then turned to leave. As he did, he stopped and looked up at the sign posted over the door. In huge, block letters, it read:

Fuck Grades,
Get Enjoyment!

Upon reading it, the President shook his head and just walked out.

Of course, I doubt the sign meant the same thing to him that it meant to me, but who knew?

Aside from shuddering, I don't know what Jim said to this. I am sure, though, that he was cool and BS'd his way out of the fix thereby getting valuable experience for what was to become his calling in Washington, DC.[19] It *is* nice to have friends.[20]

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[19] While Jim was AA for Rhodes, the Republicans were in the minority (hence Rhodes being *Minority* Whip). That meant they had very few tools at their disposal to control what was going on in Congress. Jim, it turned out, was particularly good at using Congressional procedure to logjam bills put forth by the controlling opposition (in other words, he was good at *bull shitting* at a national level). At one point, evidently, Jim was actually *cussed out* in the coatroom by none other than Tip O'Neil for having stalled so many pieces of legislation. O'Neil was pissed, but Jim was delighted. When you are in the minority, it is your duty to make life miserable for the other party. Being attacked like that was high praise. It meant he was doing his job. (I should inject here that the Republicans in Congress during the Obama years took this to a level of absurdity. *They* were in power, and *still* they blocked legislation. The word *assholes* doesn't really do them justice.)

[20] This tendency to make obscure signs that had special meaning for me but nobody else was something that got me into trouble more than once in my life. Two years after college, I had a friend pop into my room to get something for me. When she did she notice a sign on my wall that read:

THE SPIKES COME DOWN SLOWLY

You can imagine what-all passed through her mind as she read the verbiage. In fact, it all

That is all I have to say about my college experiences. After college, that was when the "fun" really started!

Oopsie . . . and it just dawned me (it's 2017), I've forgotten something . . .

One of the things in my life that was fairly major during high school and all the way through college was Vietnam and *the draft*. Roger, one of my friends in high school, was the guy I mentioned earlier who liked to work on hotrods.[21] He went into the Marines right out of high school (that's why he didn't finish the 32 Ford pick-up) and ended up getting half his jaw blown off during a firefight in a rice paddy in Vietnam. It didn't kill him, but I'm quite sure it wasn't a fun experience.

As for me, it's fascinating how life moves. I began college in September of 1966. If I'd graduated in four years, I'd have been done in 1970 whereupon I'd have been drafted immediately and most assuredly sent to Vietnam. It took me *five years*, though, to get through the program I was in at ASU, so my graduation happened in 1971 just after the *draft lottery* was instituted. My birthdate, March 13, drew number 259. They only took up to 60 the year I graduated, so I didn't get drafted upon completion of college. As much sympathy as I had for those with lower numbers, I was oh so grateful that I missed out on that thrill . . .

Also: There were *two things* that happened during my college days that weren't directly related to college but that I probably should mention for future reference.

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made perfect sense to me. After I got out of college and the "things" you will be reading about shortly happened, I spent a lot of meditative time watching how my small self would react to emotionally charged situations. As a consequence, I become hypersensitive to my inner emotional structure. What I noticed was that when something happened, my emotional response would materialize immediately. It reminded me a lot of the kind of spike you get on an oscilloscope when a capacitor discharges. I also noticed that once the spike had happened, it took a long time, in some cases hours, for the inner effects of the emotional reaction to die out completely. To remind me of this, I pasted on my bedroom wall: THE SPIKES COME DOWN SLOWLY.

Although my friend's worst fears were laid to rest when I explained the meaning, she was quite disturbed when she first saw the sign. Shortly thereafter, I decided to keep my signage to myself.

[21] He was the one who bought a 396 Chrysler hemi engine for $50 from a junkyard when he was a senior in high school, and rebuilt it with the intention of putting it into a 32 Ford pick-up. He never got the project done, but that sucker would have hauled if he had.

First, mom was not having an easy time with my sister, Patty, back in San Marino. In fact, at one point Patty ran away, was brought back, then ran away again. The second instance was over Christmas, so I happened to be home at the time. I remember driving up to Big Bear Lake where one of Patty's friends said she had gone and grabbing her literally off the street. As a consequence of that little caper, she ended up in a maximum-security psychiatric hospital down in Alhambra for several months (it was there that she was diagnosed with being bipolar).

You'd think from hearing something like this that Patty was being abused somehow. That wasn't the case. She was simply a kid with a very strong sense of herself who really, really, really wanted to be on her own with absolutely no restrictions binding her. She had a babysitter she liked who ran away and went to San Francisco when Patty was younger, and I think Patty sort of romanticized the act. One way or the other, my sister was not generally a happy camper when she was a kid.

Second, it was during my end-years at ASU that Stu's business dried up almost completely. He and mom had to sell the San Marino house and they moved into the condominium they owned down in Capistrano Beach near the mission. They subsequently divorced with him moving back up to Pasadena and mom staying in Capistrano.

Very little of this affected me directly as I was off obliviously "jiving and squealing" with my fraternity brothers in Arizona, but the divorce happened within the last year of my college career.

Chapter 5

How Very Peculiar

During the first twenty-five years of my time at Poly, the most often-asked personal question I ran into from students was how I managed to go from being a meat-eating, hard drinking, womanizing party animal with a temper like a volcano, to the relatively laid back, celibate, vegetarian, pseudo-Buddhist, tee-totaling jock and physics god they had come to know and love . . . or at least know, anyway.

"Something happened," students would say. "What was it?"

I would never tell. It was better that they wonder. Besides, I couldn't say just a little. If I spilled the beans, I'd have to say a lot. That was something I didn't want to do. What my students didn't know was that they actually had the answer all along. It all centered upon an experience my mother had the year I graduated from college, an experience I recounted to my Eastern Philosophy students under the guise *it happened to one of my mom's friends*.

One chapter of the E.Phil book covers the story. What you are about to read is a more accurate version of the incident—something that I wrote several years after the fact and have modified since. The two quotes that start off the section are from the E.Phil chapter. Most of what follows is not.

_____x_____

[Mom's story , , ,]

"I CAN'T BELIEVE ALL THAT!" SAID ALICE.
"CAN'T YOU?" THE QUEEN SAID IN A PITYING TONE. "TRY AGAIN: DRAW A LONG BREATH, AND SHUT YOUR EYES."
ALICE LAUGHED. "THERE'S NO USE TRYING," SHE SAID. "ONE CAN'T BELIEVE IMPOSSIBLE THINGS."
"I DARE SAY YOU HAVEN'T HAD MUCH PRACTICE," SAID THE QUEEN. "WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE, I ALWAYS DID IT FOR HALF AN HOUR A DAY. WHY, SOMETIMES I'VE BELIEVED AS MANY AS SIX IMPOSSIBLE THINGS BEFORE BREAKFAST."

from Alice in Wonderland,
by Lewis Carroll

I MET ONE DAY UPON THE STAIR
A LITTLE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE.
HE WASN'T THERE AGAIN TODAY,
I WISH THAT HE WOULD GO AWAY.

apologies to Hughes Hearns

The year was 1972. I was about to graduate from college. The country was talking about the U.S. pullout from Vietnam, President Nixon's historic trip to China, Apollo's return from the moon—moon rocks and all. Russian gymnast Olga Korbut was the darling of the Olympics while America's Mark Spitz won seven gold medals in swimming. On a decidedly less pleasant note, seven Israeli athletes were killed in a terrorist attack on the Olympic village, and for some people the name *Watergate* was beginning to take on considerable significance. There were parts of the United States where Zen Buddhism had become the rage; absolutely nobody was talking about channeling.

As you could probably tell from the last chapter, my life at the time was similar to tens of thousands of other male college students of the era. My residence was a fraternity house which happened to be on the campus of Arizona State University, and although I spent a lot of my time with electrical engineering books, my main interests were best summarized as playing sports, dating and, to use the jargon of the time, *jiving and squealing* as much as humanly possible.

_____x_____

[A very unusual phone call . . .]

Spring Break that year saw most of my fraternity brothers going to Mazatlán, Mexico. As it was the year I was to graduate, I'd intended to accompany them. I decided against it. My mom and stepdad had just divorced and I knew dear old Mom would appreciate my company. Two weeks before the break I called to say I was coming home for the vacation.

Our phone conversation turned out to be short and strange. I began by asking her how she was doing. She hesitated, then said with great mystery, "I've been having some troubles. They're under control, but I don't want to talk about them now. I'll tell you more when I see you at Easter."

It was all very curious, but I didn't press. My girlfriend was waiting

and I had to go. We signed off and I didn't think much more about the conversation until I did, indeed, arrive home for Easter.

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[Mom is no mental flyweight , , ,]

Brief background: I had always known my mom to be a sensible, generally down-to-earth human being. Professionally, she was a well-established, highly regarded teacher in the northern section of Los Angeles Unified School District. Along with that, she had an administrative credential and was her school's acting principal whenever her school's principal was not on campus.

What none of her colleagues and few of her friends knew, though, was that as socially and intellectually respectable as she was, Mom was also what some people would call a natural *sensitive*. She kept that part of her life quiet because she knew most folks would not accept or, at best, understand her situation. She had absolutely no control over it, and although it occasionally surfaced in other ways, its usually took form through premonitions—flashes of insight about people or situations that were often so apparently off-the-wall that not even she believed they had a chance of being or becoming a reality. Yet since early childhood she had found that these flashes were nearly always right—she really could see into individuals and circumstances in ways that were not normal.[1]

_____x_____

[Christmas was different . . .]

When Easter came and I went home, the story unfolded.[2] It never occurred to me that the problem Mom spoke of during that spring telephone conversation could have had anything to do with the bizarre time we'd had during the previous Christmas. About two days after I arrived home *that*

[1] It is interesting, though, how easily this ability could be jammed. As soon as high emotion was introduced into the equation—like the episodes when she thought I was lying to her when I was a kid—all ability to perceive at a subtle level went out the window.

[2] Note to former students: At some point in the next few pages, this story is going to begin to sound familiar. It is, essentially, the story I told about my mom's "friend," Marianne. The reality of the situation, and the one thing I never told any of you, was that the story didn't happen to a *friend* of my mom's. In fact, the person it happened to *was* my mom.

vacation, she sat me down and said in a very serious tone that she wanted to talk to me.

"You know," she began, "it has been difficult dealing with the divorce these last few months."

That wasn't hard to believe. I nodded.

She continued, "A friend at school said she'd been through a similar crisis. She suggested I get a hobby, something that wouldn't be totally frivolous but that was different and fun and interesting."

That seemed like a good idea. I nodded again.

She then took a deep breath and said, "Well, I have, but I don't think it's something you're going to like."

I laughed and said, "You've decided to become a Madam."

She laughed and said, "No, I've taken up the Ouija board."

I laughed again, then realized she wasn't laughing along with me. "You've got to be kidding," I said. "Jeez, Mom, a Ouija board?"

She was ready for me. "I'm not doing anything scientists don't do when *they* run into a phenomenon *they* don't understand."

I found that a bit hard to swallow but chose to let it pass.

She continued, "There are millions of people in this world who fervently believe there is more to a human being than just a body . . . that there is a *soul* or *being* or whatever that continues to exist after the physical body dies. And when that body dies, some believe that that *real self* moves into inner worlds where it exists as an entity unto itself."

"If that view is right," she continued, "it might be possible for an entity *on the other side* to make contact with people still here by overshadowing a psychically sensitive individual and working through that person. A Ouija board is nothing more than a psychic tool designed to facilitate such a possibility."

"But Mom," I retorted feebly, "I have friends who used to play with Ouija boards at parties when they were kids. Nothing ever happened that wasn't contrived by someone in the group."

"That's not surprising," she countered. "Most people aren't particularly sensitive in a psychic way. Nobody in their right mind would expect them to get decent results. That's not the case with me. I *am* psychic. I've been having weird things happen to me all my life. I've never been able to talk to anyone about it because there has never been anyone around who has understood, but I've been reading a lot the last few months and there are people out there who have had experiences like mine. I've decided it's time for me to do some exploring. *I really want to know if there is some-*

thing more to being a human being than meets the eye."

I wasn't ready to give up yet. I tried the academic approach.

"Mom," I said, "a lot of intellectually *with-it* people have been mulling this question over for years, and they all think psychic phenomena is bunk."

"They can intellectualize until the cows come home," she said somewhat fiercely. "They haven't had the experiences I've had. They're like blind men indignantly denouncing those who believe in the existence of light."

Mom's ire was up, but she didn't want to antagonize me so she made a concerted effort to calm down, then continued.

"I don't honestly know if there is anything to any of this," she said sincerely, "There could be other explanations for the things that have happened in my life that haven't been, well, normal. But I've decided it's time to find out one way or another. I'm not stupid. I have no intention of deluding myself. If I'm wrong, so be it. But if that be the case, at least I'll know because I've taken the time to look for myself, not because some authority on high has passed down hallowed judgment. In fact, I've already started my little experiment."[3]

Well, there I sat. My mother, whom I loved and dearly respected, had just told me she was dabbling with psychic phenomena, not to mention getting ready to go to war with a fair portion of our country's intelligentsia. It looked as though it was going to be a very long vacation.

Still, I wasn't dealing with a nitwit. Things often aren't what they appear. Sure, you could say that Mom's interpretation was off-the-wall

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[3] I'm sticking this in here because I didn't want to interrupt the flow of the previous section. What really lit mom up was reading what was for her a very uplifting book about what it is like "on the other side." It was, according to the author, written via automatic writing. From a western scientific perspective, automatic writing is pure caca. From an eastern metaphysics standpoint, it is not viewed as being so crazy. The idea is that an entity on the other side can so completely overshadows an individual in a body in the here and now, that the overshadower can use the hijacked body to do things like write stuff. It is not altogether distant from the theoretical basis for what is called *channeling*. The book mom read was supposedly written by an entity on the other side who wanted to tell people what the other side was like, thereby alleviating people's fear of dying. Mom was very service oriented. She was constantly doing helpful things for people. Part of what was motivating her about all of this was the thought that she was psychic, so why couldn't she use that to help people. Her reading was her attempt to figure out how she might do that.

and that she was the one who wasn't seeing clearly, but you could also argue the reverse. Was she the fool for trusting her instincts and personal experiences, for being open minded and inquisitive about the nature of humankind and consciousness and the possibility of after-death states, or was I the fool for taking the know-it-all stance of the conventional skeptic when, in fact, I really knew nothing about the possibilities? If I was being honest, it wasn't an easy question to answer.

Toward the end of the vacation, Mom sat me down with her Ouija board and the two of us tried it together. She explained her technique.

"When I work alone with the board," she said, "I wait until I feel someone or something around, then verbally or mentally ask a question. In most cases, the board spells out an answer."

"It's hard to explain," she continued. "I know it's my muscles that are motivating the touch-plate, but when it moves there seems to be something else going on."

The two of us then put our hands on the touch-plate and Mom asked questions aloud. I must say that I felt a bit foolish. The touch-plate moved around some but I really couldn't tell whether its motion was due to ghosties or if it was just Mom and me. I left unconvinced.

It turns out that it wasn't until I had returned to school that Mom's little experiment, shall we say, blossomed.

_____x_____

[A new toy . . .]

In leaving after Christmas break, my thoughts about Mom's new interests were non-committal. I wasn't sure what was really driving her—I didn't know if she was bored with life or worried about death or what—but I could see she was serious and I figured she'd come to grips with her problem sooner or later. After all, aside from being willing to examine ideas that were not acceptable by Western standards, she was the same old Mom I had known for years . . . bright-eyed, energetic, happy, fun to be around. Time would tell.

She proceeded with her experiment. According to her, within a few weeks she was getting fairly regular responses from the board. At some point she got a very strong feeling that the entity she was in contact with was her departed mother—a woman who had died when mom was quite

young.[4] Mom spent a fair amount of time asking questions about things she had always wondered about from her childhood, receiving answers from the entity that she (mom) felt made sense. She was feeling more and more comfortable with what she was doing.

Maybe three weeks after it all started, Mom sat down to the Ouija board in the hopes of communicating with her mother, and the board took off immediately. The message was short and succinct. It said, "This is dangerous. I come no more."

With that, everything went flat. No movement on the board no matter what Mom did. It scared her so she stopped trying. After a few days and a fair amount of thinking, though, she rationalized that she was in completely control and, after all, *what could go wrong*? With that, she began again.

After her hiatus, she found that she got immediate responses whenever she sat down. What was weird, aside from what she was actually doing, was that often the answers were reasonable but skewed.

For instance, she asked about finding a good used Volvo for sale (an odd things to ask, but that's what she did). The board wrote out an address in the middle of Los Angeles. She drove to the address to see what was there. Sure enough, she found a used car lot, but it was a used car lot that had *never sold Volvos*.[5]

Answers would come, but they were often twisted.[6]

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[4] Interesting footnote: According to my mom, about two weeks after her mother died, my mom was taken back to her home by relatives to get some toys and stuff. She went in alone. While upstairs, she got a funny feeling that she should go into her mother's room. She did and, according to her, standing in the corner of the room was her own departed mother. Mom evidently wasn't frightened. The seemingly solid apparition smiled at her, said, "Don't worry, honey, everything is going to be all right," then vanished. For obvious reasons, she never told anyone about the happening until me. But that wasn't the last she heard from her mother. Years later, my dad and my mom were apparently asleep one night in the house they were renting after being married, when at 3 AM, EVERY LIGHT IN THE HOUSE WENT ON. There was evidently some confusion and a little bit of irritation as dad went around the house, turning off the stupid lights, but he got the job done and they both went back to sleep. The next morning, mom told dad that as bizarre as it was going to sound, she had realized when she awoke that the lights went on exactly ten years TO THE MINUTE from when her mother had died. My dad was the one who told me the story. When I asked mom about it later, she said she had forgotten all about it, but that *yes*, it had happened. She really did have strange stuff happen around her that was not normal.

[5] And no, she hadn't been looking in the newspaper for cars, so the address wasn't something she had seen and had unconsciously drawn up out of her subconscious.

[6] At this point, you may be thinking "kindling." Don't go there yet. There's interesting stuff coming.

As you can tell, the board became a pleasant, obsessive diversion. Then one particular day she was sitting at the Ouija board when she got the eerie feeling she could tell what the board was going to do before it did it. Of course, that sounds ridiculous. She was ultimately the board's motivator, spooks or no, so even if there were entities around, one would expect her to be at least subconsciously aware of what was about to take place.

It wasn't that simple, though. She began to feel that she was making a more tangible, mental link with something other than herself. It was a bit frightening. She initially mistrusted her perceptions, but along with the trepidation there was a bit of fascination and an urgency to push on.

She still wasn't sure if the other side existed—not sure beyond a shadow of a doubt—but as this strange feeling grew she became absolutely sure of one thing. If it *did* exist and she *was* sensing the presence of conscious entities on the other side, she felt more and more that she could focus her mind and push through the veils that separated her from them ... AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT SHE DID.

Mom quite literally pried open the doors into the next level—the inner worlds. She found that she could make a direct mental contact with entities around her on the other side whenever she chose to "tune in" as she put it. And in connecting, she could communicate with them just as she would with a real person standing next to her.[7]

It wasn't as though she was *imagining* people were talking to her. She told me later that it was just like holding a conversation with someone over the phone—nobody was there in the room with her, but she could hear a voice just as though someone was. The only difference was that the sensing organs were not her ears. She was having a spontaneous, coherent, intelligent, verbalized conversation with an identifiable "someone else" through a direct, telepathic link in her mind. She was fully aware that most people would think her daft if they knew what she was doing, but she persevered and became not only secure but comfortable with her newfound ability.

Over the weeks, there were a number of entities she came to recognize and with whom she made semi-regular contact. One special male

[7] It's important to understand that this was not something mom had read about or had heard people talk about. There did exist at the time the idea of the seance, where an individual would supposedly contact the dead, but in most cases (most of which mom knew to be fraudulent) the contact would be done by someone in a trance. According to mom, NOBODY she was aware of was talking about or writing about the experience she was dabbling in. As far as she knew, she was messing with something altogether unheard of.

voice came quite often and she soon began to think of him as her guardian. Whenever she was having troubles and wanted help, she would focus her mind at him, tune in, and he would come through. She would also tune in to whoever or whatever happened to be around whenever she had nothing better to do—a kind of amusement. She told me that one day while passing a hearse in a funeral procession on the freeway, she tuned in and heard an old man's voice say, "Gee, isn't this amazing."

Tuning in became something she did quite regularly.

I should probably mention that there was one other peculiarity about her conversations with her guardian. After a few minutes of dialogue, the conversations would often be interrupted by the arrival of entities who were not particularly savory. She and the guardian came to call them "the bad guys." Mom would always close down communications by *tuning out* whenever her guardian warned of their coming.

Regardless of the bad guys, the old gal had a wonderful new toy. On the surface, she was as sane as you or me. She still taught her kindergarten class with the vim and vigor that had made her one of the top teachers in LACC. She would still sit with friends and discuss politics, books, and movies. And when people were in need, she would listen to their problems or take action to help if she could.

She hadn't changed outwardly at all. But inwardly, she was different. She had control of her mind in a way she had never dreamed possible—she could tune into the other side at will. It was as though someone had opened up a whole new world to her . . .

_____x_____

[The plot thickens . . .]

On a cool, late-February/early March night, just a month or two after I had gone back to school after Christmas break, Mom went to see a friend in Newport Beach. Coming home around 11:00 PM on a relatively empty freeway, she decided to tune in to see who might be around. Almost immediately, a pleasant but unfamiliar male voice came through to greet her.

Mom was sorry it was not her guardian, but she always enjoyed meeting and talking to new individuals. They talked for a considerable time before she asked, "Do you know my guardian?"

"Oh, yes," replied the voice, "I know your guardian."

She was delighted. After a few more minutes of conversation she

asked, "How long have you been friends with my guardian?"

There was a short silence, then the man said, "You've misunderstood, my dear. I didn't say I was *friends* with your guardian, I only said I knew him."

The change of tone made the hairs on the back of Mom's neck stand on end. Guardedly, carefully, she formed the next question in her mind. "Who are you?"

"Don't you know?" he said in an inquisitive voice.

Then in an almost inaudible whisper he added, "I'm one of the bad guys." And with that he shattered the relative peace with the most explosive, sinister, hysterical laughter she had ever heard.

Terrified, she tried to *tune out*. She couldn't.

If you can imagine a hell on earth, you can imagine what life was like for Mom over the next month. Not realizing it, she had flung open the psychic doors within herself, doors meant by nature to be closed and locked, and the dregs of the underworld now had complete, unfettered access to her.

Entities would come and speak in kind ways only to turn like a flash and pour out hateful, venomous filth. At night she would be awakened by terrifying screams, except the screams would not be coming from *out there*, they would be coming from inside her head. Beings who were obviously in deep distress would come regularly and plead for help. Entities would say horrible, hateful things about her daughter. Whole groups of voices would descend on her to hold wild, loud, angry conclaves in which she was the focus of their rage and malice. Her mind was like a giant, empty room ready to be filled at a moment's notice with anyone who wished to enter.

For weeks she had no choice but to coexist with the most deranged of souls. They could come and go in her mind at will as long as she was not focused on something that demanded her full attention. Once that focus was no longer required and she lapsed into the mentally slack state that most of us exist in a fair portion of our lives, they would be back. She was, in short, completely out of control. She could not close the doors—she could not tune out . . . and it didn't take long before she began to fear that she had quite literally lost her mind.

Trying to contact her guardian didn't help. Once all hell broke loose, he never came again.[8]

[8] I wondered later whether her so-called guardian was really a no-good whose purpose was

Mom's salvation was found in her library. As she sloshed through this cesspool of abuse and torment, she began to mentally search her memory for anything she had read that might help. She knew she could not rely on contemporary psychologists or psychiatrists. Conventional medical people would almost certainly conclude that she was crazy and place her in an institution where she would never get the help she needed.[9] There had to be another way.

Finally, the name came. She had seen it in a book by Jess Stearn. He had written briefly about a Pasadena woman, Kay Croissant, who as far as he could tell was responsibly knowledgeable about psychic problems but wasn't at all interested in attracting public attention. In fact, the woman, it turned out later, was not the least bit amused at having been included in Stearn's book. Still, Mom got hold of a Pasadena phone directory and found the woman's name.

It took two to three weeks for Mom's newfound friend to help her back into control. Kay had a meditation group that met somewhat irregularly but whose focus was to project thought and healing energy toward people in distress. They went into action on Mom's behalf.[10]

In addition, Mom was told to visualize white light flooding down into the auric complex around her physical body, and to "pull up the auric shielding" that exists around all of us as a kind of natural protection between our waking self and the other levels—the inner worlds. She was to do both of these mental exercises at least five times a day.

Mom was also instructed to command the highest in her—Kay called this her *high mind*—to close the doors into the other levels and to instruct her sub-conscious mind to stand guard over those doors no matter what the inquisitive "personal self" might say or do. Part of the problem, Mom was told, was with the personal mind's fascination with psychic phenomena. Even though such experiences can be terribly frightening, they are also titillating to the personal self. It is that fascination that holds the doors open.

Mom followed Kay's instruction religiously and, with Kay's help,

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to lull her into a false sense of security.

9 It is interesting the number of mental patients who adamantly maintain that they hear voices.

10 Ever the researcher, in the beginning mom would notice the time when the invasive activity would dampen, then later would ask Kay when her group had started their meditation for her. The two times would line up dead-on, every time. It finally got to the point where mom just knew when they were working for her because everything around her would change and the voices would go away.

was finally able to close out the voices.[11]

_____x_____

[AWAKE, AWAKE SWEET PRINCE . . . or something like that.]

I was a normal guy when I was in college. I wanted to party. I wanted a hot girlfriend. I wanted to learn a little something from my classes so I could go out and get a decent job, but in any case I didn't spend a lot of time thinking deeply. So with all that standard, normal, young-guy vapidity, in looking back I can see very clearly that I fervently believed in the world of my peers. I had a spectacularly inflated estimation of my own rightness when it came to my views about life. It *never crossed my mind* that my view of the world could be even slightly off the mark, much less dead wrong. In short, if anyone else had told me the *I'm one of the bad guys* tale, given the implications that naturally had to follow if the story was true, I would have laughing them right out of the room. Either that or I would have suggested that they needed serious, SERIOUS, ***SERIOUS*** psychiatric help.

The reason I didn't act this way, obviously, was because I wasn't hearing the story from someone I deemed a lunatic. The person who told me the story was someone I knew very well. She was not naïve; she was not stupid; she was not doing drugs. THIS WAS MY MOM, a person I trusted and respected. She had just gotten the doors shut and the voices blotted out when I called before Easter. At the time, if you will remember, she'd said on the phone that she'd had a problem, that it was under control, and that she didn't want to talk about it just then.

The reason for all that was not evident at the time, but she obviously didn't want to discuss the experience for fear that doing so might open things up on her again.

When I did get home during Easter vacation and she told me what had happened, she was very clear that she didn't want people to know about her ordeal. She knew people wouldn't understand. It had been, though, a very frightening experience. In fact, it freaked her to the extent that thirty years later, she was still flooding her aura with white light and mentally pulling up the auric shields around her every day, just like Kay had told her

[11] Although it wouldn't hurt to try, for reasons that will become evident with time, this is unfortunately not a foolproof recipe when dealing with these kinds of problems.

to do during their first conversation.

As for me, the whole proposition was very unsettling. My perspective at the time didn't even *acknowledge* the possibility of such things, much less explain them. Mom's experience had burst my nice, neat, sanitary view of *the way things are*, and that was *not* the end of it[12] (translation: the next chapter beckons . . .).

_____x_____

[Additional thoughts . . .]

Minor point #1: The idea of *psychic phenomena* is out there. Sure, there are lots of people who pooh-pooh it, but there are also lots of fairly reasonable, inquisitive souls who are open to the idea. I tell my students this story, minus the fact that it was my mom who experienced it, because I *don't* think psychic phenomenon is something they should be playing with.

As I say at the end of the chapter devoted to this in the E.Phil book I wrote for my urchins:

> "If science is correct, *psychic phenomena* is bunk and should be avoided for the fraud that it is. What's more, if

[12] Though this is not what I was referring to when I said *that was not the end of it*, even the *events* that led up to mom's tale affected me in a surprising way. My girlfriend was nearly raped by a guy who had broken into her apartment the last summer we were together (we were engaged at the time). He didn't succeed, but I nevertheless had an overwhelming desire to find and do serious damage to the guy (castration was a thought). In listening to mom talk about the connectedness of all humans that Easter, and the fact that lovingness was one of the things her automatic writing book had emphasized as being the primary thing we as humans are supposed to be developing within ourselves while in a body, I decided to do something outrageous, given my *red-blooded American* credentials. I sat down one night during that Easter break after mom had gone to bed (I was in my bedroom), and in the dark I meditated toward the guy. I made what felt like a mental link with the fellow, then in all sincerity I gave him a blessing. I projected toward him what, I think, was much the same tone that Gandhi took with the English, that of a father dealing with a loved child that had gone wrong. What was bizarre was that within seconds of my extending that loving thought, a brilliant, almost blinding white light presented itself at the top of my field of vision (remember, I had my eyes closed in a dark room) and slowly moved downward engulfing me in light over a twenty or thirty-second period. It was like being bathed by the sun. I finally opened my eyes before it got to the bottom to see if there was some kind of spotlight, maybe a car light, coming in from out on the street (the upstairs bedroom I slept in had a window that obliquely faced the street). There was nothing there. The room was completely dark—the light was coming from within. The experience left me speechless.

> the more responsible teachers out of the East are correct, it exists but is not something one should focus on. Powers come and go like the wind. You only have so much energy available to you during your life. Direct your efforts toward something that is going to be of lasting quality in a spiritual sense. If the teachers are right, *it is safer to stick your head into a powder magazine with a lit torch than to play with psychic phenomena*.[13]
>
> In short, either way, psychic phenomenon is something to stay clear of!"

Minor note #2: It is interesting that high emotion—extreme anger, for instance—is believed within Eastern metaphysics to cause auric dislocation from which a psychically inclined person can be partially overshadowed by an entity on the other side. It wasn't immediately evident why I might have been singled out for the attention, but it is interesting that when Mom was so intensely, angrily involved with me during my supposed lying phase in junior high, it was almost as though someone was subliminally whispering in her ear that I couldn't be trusted. If her *I'm one of the bad guys* episode is any indication, that, on some level, may actually have been the case![14] [15]

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[13] Apologies to Talbot Mundy.

[14] If you will remember, I said when writing about this in Chapter 1 that I thought there might be more going on underneath the surface than was superficially obvious. Now you know what I think that something was.

[15] Kindling? Still more to come . . .

Chapter 6

Kay

[Note: When Mohandas Gandhi died, Albert Einstein is supposed to have said, "Generations to come will scarcely believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth."

Kay was not exactly such a person, but the individuals she was associated with . . . well, I'll let you be the judge.]

During that Easter break, Mom took me to meet the woman who saved her, Kay. I don't remember precisely what I expected, but what I found was a very pleasant, friendly, heavy set, low-keyed, seemingly normal woman who was about thirty years my senior. In fact, I was a bit surprised at *how* normal she was—not at all what I expected from someone well versed in the kind of difficulties dear old Mom had encountered.

Sure, Kay had idiosyncrasies. There was that 10,000 book private library she had housed in her home—that certainly wasn't normal[1]. . . and she was the vice president and co-founder of a non-profit organization that provided grant money and expertise for small, inner city, human-based projects like day-care centers, etc., . . . and she was

[1] She and her late husband, a professor at Occidental College, loved books and had started collecting them twenty-five years earlier. You can see some of them in the photo. Kay is the short, squatty one (eyes closed—atta girl). You will meet others in the picture later—Brian in the upper left next to Kay, (I'm in the back row in the middle with the mustache), Cathy's next to me, Nicks bottom left. The only one of "the originals" not in the photo was Brent, but more about that and them later.

remarkably knowledgeable—both the school-bought kind and the kind that comes from reading voraciously since she was six years old—about history, literature, travel, Western religion and Eastern philosophy. But aside from all that, she appeared to be just like anyone else.

The two of us became good friends that next summer. We talked at length about all sorts of things. And as we did, I began to realize that the world was a whole lot bigger than I had thought, and that my perspective was a whole lot narrower than I had ever dreamed.

Having said that, to *really* understand how life changed for me during that summer, you need to understand considerably more about Kay. What I am about to tell you was laid out to me over a fairly long period of time. In fact, she told me very little of this at the beginning. Nevertheless, understanding her situation is important to the overall story.

Kay was born Helen Kathleen Arnoll in Ithaca, New York, where her father was the assistant to the president of the New York Railroad (I think that was what it was called). Shortly thereafter, her family moved to New York City, NY, where, at the age of three, Kay came down with diphtheria, then almost immediately thereafter, scarlet fever.

The diphtheria produced sinus pressure that was so great, the doctor had to operate on her on the family's kitchen table, crushing the bone fronting the sinus to let off the pressure. He thought she would almost certainly die. She didn't. She came out of the double ordeal with a weak heart from the scarlet fever and with a deep, sizable depression over her right eye from the diphtheria-instigated operation.

There was one other thing. She found after the illnesses that she could see things other people evidently didn't see—etheric forms and lights and such,[2] and that she had unusually strong premonitions about things that were invariably correct. It would appear that the experience had opened up a psychic nature to her existence.

After the dust settled, her doctors decided that the New York weather would not be good for Kay, so her mother took her and traveled to California. Boldly approaching Frank Wiggins, then secretary of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce (this was like being its CEO), Kay's mom asked, on behalf of her husband, for a job. Wiggins was so impressed by this gutsy little lady that he made Mr. Arnoll—Arthur—his right-hand man. In

[2] No, this wasn't an optical effect brought on by possible damage to the eye during the kitchen-table surgery. As before, read on.

fact, when Wiggins died, Kay's dad became the head of the Chamber of Commerce. With the sizable income the job afforded, the family was able to buy and move into a spacious, two-story home in Glendale.

Kay's childhood illnesses left her physically weak, but her urge to learn was enormous. With little outside help, she taught herself to read so she could learn more about Egypt, a place for which she had an unquenchable passion. In fact, her physical frailty kept her from having a formal education until junior high. Just after the family moved to San Marino, she began attending South Pasadena Junior High (San Marino didn't yet have a school system of its own). At one point she attended Westridge, but she didn't like it and returned to graduate from South Pasadena High.

With graduation, she applied to and was accepted at Occidental College. There, in her freshman English class, she met the man she would fall in love with and marry. He was the course's professor, Albert Croissant, a 38-year-old scholar who fell in love with her at first sight. She was only 18 at the time. She didn't encourage him much in the beginning, but as time progressed it became clear that the two had everything in common and were meant to be together. They were secretive about their romance, but the day after graduation they married and bought the Pasadena house she would live in for the rest of her life.[3]

For twenty-four years, from 1937 to late 1961, Kay and her husband had a wonderful life together. Their idea of a fun time on weekends was to haunt used bookstores. As their library grew, space within the house became short. There were piles of books everywhere. She was an informal scholar who was very happy being a professional scholar's wife.

What's more, the two of them decided that books were something everyone should have access to. After World War II, they started what they called *Magazines for Friendship*, a non-profit organization they ran out of their home. The operation was devoted to starting small village libraries all over the world. They would go to Moose Lodges, charity organizations, Shriner's Clubs, etc., asking for donated books, then send the books off to whoever asked for them. By the late fifties, they had helped start

[3] Interesting tidbit: At one point during their life together, Albert became friends with Albert Einstein. They even had him and his wife, who Kay said was very protective of her husband, over for dinner one night. Kay said of the meeting that Einstein was very cordial, but that periodically he would kind of daze off (most probably thinking about some physics problem). He would be "gone" for a short period of time, then would return and would join once again the conversation. I own the house now. The dining room table he sat at during that dinner is still in the dining room. Pretty cool, eh?

over 100 small libraries, mostly in third world countries.[4]

At the beginning of 1961, some interesting things happened that foreshadowed what Kay would be doing for the rest of her life. One of the professors at Oxy had died and his widow was inconsolable. The woman, in her despair, began visiting psychics in an attempt to contact the deceased husband.

One of the many areas in which Kay and her husband had read extensively was spiritualism. Kay had, since her illnesses, had a strong psychic nature, but both she and her husband agreed with Mme. Blavasky and the Theosophists that people who ran séances were either frauds or, if reputable, probably unaware of the dangers and ramifications of the practice (I'll talk more about Blavasky and company later). In short, although they understood and were sympathetic to why the widow was doing what she was doing, Kay and Albert wanted to dissuade her from continuing along that path.

Kay invited the grieving widow to dinner one evening. During the meal, they talked about what was actually going on when a real psychic uses a Ouija Board. Then, after dinner, Kay got out an old Ouija board she had stored away. As a favor to the woman, Kay and Al placed their hands on the board. When they did, they got an almost immediate response.

As best they could tell, the entity coming through was the woman's husband. He said he was well and that he would always love her, but that she should stop trying to reach him. He was *going on*, as he put it, and he assured her that whoever she might contact from that night forward would not be himself.

In and of itself, if I'd been told this tale and nothing else, I'd have concluded that Kay and her husband had faked the reading to assure, then redirect the grieving widow toward something more useful and whole-

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4 There were a number of funny stories that came out of their experiences with *Magazines for Friendship*. They got a letter, for instance, from some fairly obscure place in Africa, asking for Bibles. They sent a few and, within months, got a flood of letters, all exactly the same, all written in different handwritings, all from the same region. Kay and her husband had initially assumed they were dealing with good, God-fearing people, but something in the letters made them suspicious. At some point, they were able to have someone they knew who was going to that area check things out. It turned out that the requesters had realized that the extremely thin paper that was used in Bibles at the time was excellent for rolling cigarettes, and they were cutting the Bibles up and selling them page by page to smokers. Needless to say, Kay ignored the next slew of Bible requests that came in from that area.

some. There was more to the story, though.

The supposed dead husband signed off and almost immediately thereafter a second entity come through. The individual identified himself as Flumwack (an odd name, but that was it). Neither Kay or Albert were particularly impressed, but it was novel—something they really weren't expecting—and the entity did say a few things about their marriage that was insightful. After a short time, Flumwack said he had to go and asked that they meet again over the Ouija Board later that week. The date was set.

After the second meeting and over the next several weeks, Kay and Albert "met" Flumwack on the Ouija Board just about every night.

There were two things that kept them coming back.

First, at some point early-on when the answers were short and simple, Kay began to *hear* the letters spelled out in her head before she and Albert saw them on the board, much like my mom's situation.[5] It seems she had done what my mother had done—made an audible, psychic connection to someone or something on the other side.[6]

Second, again early on, Flumwack made a series of fairly obscure predictions that, within a short period of time, came true. Their interaction also took on an unexpected teacher/student turn. Flumwack would make a prediction, it would come true, then he would analyze the couple's response to the happening. He would then make another prediction, something would happen that turned out to be exactly opposite the prediction, then he would analyze their response to *that* happening. It was a kind of psychological dance that Kay and Albert found interesting.

Flumwack's final prediction was that sometime in the next two weeks, Kay would be approached and given the opportunity to do something wholly unexpected. They weren't to contact him until it happened.

Sure enough, within two weeks a friend of a friend asked the couple to hear the famous medium Arthur Ford speak about his *Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship*. It seems the organization was doing experiments with Edgar Cayce-like mediumship readings for health, and they were looking for people who might be interesting in participating.

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[5] Remember that in this case, what was being presented on the board was the consequence of the presence of both her *and* her husband, so she wasn't the sole player as had been the case with my mom. Also, at some point she began to hear the *words* being spoken.

[6] I'm not sure exactly when the transition happened between hearing the letters and hearing the author's voice speaking the words, but somewhere along the line Kay and Albert got to the place where they used the board solely for focusing purposes. They would make the puck go round and round, never bothering to stop on letters, and Kay would just speak the words she heard coming through.

During the lecture, Ford strayed from his presentation to say that he felt a considerable amount of mediumship in the room that night, and asked that the individual responsible come forward to talk to him after the lecture.

This certainly could have been a standard ploy to attract people who *thought* they were psychic to come forward, but Kay suspected he was talking about her so she approached him after the lecture (interestingly, she was in fact the only one to do so). On the spot, he offered her the opportunity to join him and the other researchers in their effort. She declined.

On the drive home, Kay and Albert decided that their interaction with Flumwack was over. If his contact with them was about mediumship, she wasn't interested. She didn't believe people in general should be encouraged to mess with psychic phenomena, and that was what Ford's research would unwittingly do. Being psychic wasn't a toy. People had enough trouble dealing with life in the rough without having to deal with the additional titillation of otherworld experiences. She and Albert intended to get on the board to give Flumwack a piece of their minds, then send him packing.

Kay made the mental link. Flumwack seemed to be waiting for her. She rather boldly stated her beliefs as to his motives, said she wasn't completely sure he was even *on* the other side, told him that she had no intention of going along with what she believed he wanted, and ended the tirade by saying that she didn't even believe that his name *was* Flumwack . . . and that it could be Flapdoodle for all she cared.

With that explosion, the tone of the voice on the other end changed dramatically. He said that she was right, that he wasn't a disincarnate but, in fact, a *chela* (pronounced *chayla*) in a body sitting in the ashram of his Master in India at that moment. He said that her decision to stand up against him was what they had been waiting and hoping for, and that one of the Masters was there who wanted to speak to her.[7] The individual who

[7] A little background: *If* the purpose of life-in-general and humankind-in-particular is to evolve in a spiritual sense (we'll talk more about what that might mean later), it's not a hard jump to make, as the East does, that there exist individuals who have moved a very long way beyond the norm of humanity along that path, so much so that they have essentially learned all that there is to learn from this place. Traditionally in India, these beings have been called *mahatmas*—great souls (interesting note: people who didn't know any better called Gandhi *mahatma* Gandhi). Tradition maintains that from their ranks have come the avatars—the world teachers. Christ and *the Buddha* are believed to be of these. In the west, the mahatmas are sometimes collectively called *the Masters of Wisdom* and/or *the White Brotherhood*. Throughout my time with Kay, we simply referred to them as

next spoke identified himself simply as K.H.

At this point in the story, I should inject a point of order, especially for those who are not familiar with Theosophical lore.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, there was a Russian noblewoman named H.P. Blavasky who had fled an arranged marriage in Russia and traveled extensively all over the middle east.[8] Blavasky was a *different* sort in that she saw things and knew things that were not normal, and in that she'd had a recurring dream during her early life in which she came into contact with a tall, turbaned, Indian teacher who was very benevolent, very wise, and very powerful. Additionally, she felt very sure that this was an individual who was real and was someone she had known before.[9]

In 1851, Blavasky found herself in England. It was the time of what was called *The Great Exhibition*. Located in Hyde Park, the exhibition included *The Crystal Palace* in which scientific and technological inventions from all around the world were presented. During the six months that the exhibit was open, over six million people from all over the world visited. This, naturally, included representatives from all over the British Empire.

One day, while Blavasky was walking, she came around a corner to see a group of Rajput princes from India standing some way up the street. In the middle of the group stood the very man she had seen in her dreams since she was wee small, all six foot eight inches of him. Her first impulse was to run up to him, but he evidently looked up, saw her and made a sign for her to stay. This she did. In short order, the man and the other Indians turned and walked away.

The next day, Blavasky was walking in Hyde Park thinking about the experience, when up walked the man.

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the Brothers. In any case, it is believed that there comes a time in an individual's spiritual evolution when it is appropriate to not only come into contact with one of these Teachers, it is appropriate to become an "accepted student" of one of the Teachers (and no, I make no claim to that status). The Sanskrit word for someone who has moved to that place within life is called a *chela*. It was, evidently, a chela who initially contacted Kay as "Flumwack."

[8] A lot of her travel was done under the guise of a man.

[9] Interesting point: I read a biography about Blavasky in which this dream aspect was never mentioned. I asked one of my compatriots, Cathy, about it, and she seemed to think that Blavasky had "seen" the man in early childhood (sort of like in a vision), but that it wasn't a dream kind of thing. I'm not completely clear on the point, though I do remember Kay talking about dreams. One way or the other, Blavasky evidently had some kind of recognizable inner contact with the man because when she saw him later in life in London, she recognized him and he recognized her. More about that shortly.

It was at that time that Blavasky learned for the first time who and what she was. The man told her that she was a chela, that in several previous lives she had had training, and that although they would have preferred to use a more highly evolved chela for the work they had in mind, karma had moved in such a way as to make her the best possibility. She was told that she didn't have to accept, but that if she wished to, she could proceed. She accepted. The name of that Master was Morya. The name of the second Master who would, with time, work with Blavasky was Koot Hoomi, better known as K.H.

Blavasky went on to do her duty to humanity. She began the Theosophical Society through which she brought a reasonable, rational view of reincarnation and karma to the Western world.[10] [11] Theosophists to this day maintain that the Masters have not been in contact with anyone since Blavasky, and for good reason: there are so many people out there who would exploit people's hopes and prayers by masquerading as a messenger from the Brotherhood.[12] Indeed, there is a litany of usurpers who have used the names of Morya and K.H. and others in an attempt to legitimize their particular brand of teaching. What Theosophists have had to grapple with ever since Blavasky has been the question, "Is someone who claims to be in touch with the Masters really in touch with the Masters, or are they simply deluded or, more seriously, frauds?"

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[10] Another interesting note: One of the works Blavasky produced was a highly esoteric tome called *The Secret Doctrine*. As maligned as she was from all quarters—the Christian missionaries in India hated her because she got in their way with the Hindus, and the skeptics didn't like her because she was psychic—*The Secret Doctrine* became well known within the scientific community in the U. S. No less a celebrity than Millikan of *Millikan Oil-Drop* fame, and Einstein of . . . well . . . Einsteinian fame read the two-volume text and seemed genuinely moved by what they read. In fact, there was a time when the only way you could get your hands on the copy at Caltech's library was to put your name on a very long waiting list. And for the record, I have the six-volume set with the last volume being a *440-page index*!

[11] As an additional aside, the Theosophical Society splinter into factions after Blavasky died in 1891 (there is even a "chapter" in Pasadena, California). The original organization was based in Adyar, Madras (now Chennai) with a publishing house (The Theosophical Publishing House) located in Wheaten, Illinois (there is also Quest Books in New York City which carries a lot of Theosophical material). Blavasky moved into Adyar in December of 1882. When I was in India, I stayed in the complex at Adyar (they had guest accommodations available to anyone—it had nothing to do with my slim connection to the Brothers). Unfortunately, the historical import of being there didn't really register with me at the time, mainly because I was sick as a dog for the whole stay. Interestingly, though, of all the 26 cities I visited during that trip, I felt the most at home in Madras.

[12] This is what the Masters were called, collectively, by early Theosophists.

Their answer? Theosophists believe that the Masters haven't presented themselves to the world since Blavasky.

This is not a problem. In fact, I support the stand in theory. Nevertheless, according to Kay, the individual she spoke with that night, clairaudially, was a very benevolent being who identified himself as K.H.

Basically, what Kay was told was that she had had some training in several previous lives, but that she was not trained for what they had in mind for her (sound familiar?). Should she choose to work for them, they said, things would unfold accordingly. There would be training. There would be choices to be made. There would be tests to pass. How she would proceed would depend solely upon her own self.

It was her choice as to whether she would accept their offer and proceed, or not. At the end of the discussion, K.H. gave her a blessing and left.

Kay and Al talked about the ramifications of what they had been told. Kay decided she would move forward and accepted the offer. Exactly what happened next is not clear, but there was a little under a year or so during which Kay's training proceeded. She was constantly challenged to analyze her attitudes about things. She was also made to analyze experiences she was having inwardly. At one point the doors into the astral were opened in a manner similar to the situation my mom ran into.[13] On her own, Kay had to figure out how to control the situation and close the doors. Unlike my mother, who had forced open the doors, Kay was someone who really had had extensive training in earlier lives. Dealing with the astral was more of an exercise in remembering something she already knew than completely re-inventing the wheel. Nevertheless, she had the thrill of grappling with the same disincarnate craziness that drove my mom to seek Kay's help in the *I'm one of the bad guys* episode, except she solved the problem solo.

The training proceeded. Her efforts were to clear her mind and to build the kind of mental strength she would need to do whatever she was to do.[14] She also had to handle the tests of resolve that came.

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[13] The word *astral* refers to the level in the inner worlds where earth-bounds are found to reside. I'll say more about this later.

[14] She still didn't know what that was to be.

The Teachers rarely made comments that had a predictive nature,[15] but about a year after everything started, they told her that in a very short time her life would change dramatically.

Two weeks later, Albert unexpectedly died.

I'm sure this was a traumatic time for Kay. She had been given a wonderful opportunity with her work with the Teachers, but she was human just like you and me and she dearly love her husband. He was evidently allowed to speak to her once or twice after he crossed over. The first time, he said it was clear that it had been his time, that he would be reincarnating soon, most probably in India, and that she shouldn't worry about him. Then he was gone . . . almost.

Evidently, she couldn't find the deed to a small cabin they owned in the high desert outside Apple Valley. After looking long and hard, she heard his voice one last time. He said, "Look on top of the Secretary." She looked. There was the deed. (That I have a photo of the Secretary, it's in the middle of the picture, is bizarre, but when I was preparing to remove the sliding-glass door to be replaced by French doors--notice the toolbox--I apparently took this picture. The Secretary hasn't moved since it was first put in place back who-knows-when, which means it was over sixty years ago that Kay found the deed on its top.)

At this point, Kay took a huge leap of faith. She had little money, but she pulled what she had out of the bank and financed what was to become a trip around the world. She and Albert had received countless invitations to visit village libraries they had helped start all over the globe through *Magazines for Friendship*, and she decided it was time to make that trip. Within a few months, she and her friend and next-door neighbor, Becky, were on their way.

I don't know all of the stuff that happened during that period. I do know that the head of the Ramakrishna order in India invited her to travel with him, visiting inner ashrams that normal people would never have

[15] One of the few was that Kay's karma was to travel widely, whereas Albert's was not.

access to, studying and learning in settings that were available to only a select few. It was an offer that would have taken several years of her life. With her love of learning, she would have greatly enjoyed taking him up on the offer, but she knew it wasn't the right thing to do so she refused.

I also know that before the trip, she asked the Teachers for some kind of proof—something that would convince her beyond all doubt that she was in contact with the Brotherhood (remember, everything that was happening in the way of contact was through clairaudial means).

They said that proof like that could only be granted to someone who had a deep karmic repository of service to the whole of life. She hadn't done very much yet but, they said, they would see what they could do.[16]

Before Kay left, she was told to keep her ears open and that she might come in contact with a man who would say to her, "You've come from the West to meet the men on the mountain."

So she was off.

When Kay was in Delhi, India, she and Becky, her traveling companion, were leaving for an engagement one evening when the two were met in the lobby of their hotel by a man who said he could do incredible things with his mind. He offered to show them, saying additionally that he knew they would find his abilities interesting. Kay politely declined, saying that she had somewhere to go, and left.

When they returned, the man was still there, patiently waiting for them in the lobby. Kay and Becky spoke with him for a time and, deciding that the man was harmless, invited him to their room for a more extended discussion.

When there, the man did, indeed, do marvelous things. He asked if they had a piece of paper. They did. He asked them to pick a corner of the room. They did. He went to that corner and put his head against the wall so that he couldn't see into the room. He told them to take the paper, hide what they were doing, but write something on the sheet. They did. He then proceeded to face them and, with a smile, tell them spot on what they had written. He did this several times.

Of course, Kay had all sorts of questions to ask the man. He was quite forthcoming and the conversation lasted almost two hours. At the

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16 It is interesting the self-imposed constraints that are placed on such highly evolved Beings . . . and why the constraints exist. I will talk about this more later, but if you'd like to read more about the world of such individuals from an outside source, find the book *The Mahatma Letters* by A.P. Sinnett.

end of the time he said he had to leave. Becky escorted him across the room to the door, but just as he reached it he turned and said to Kay, "Oh, I almost forgot. I know why you are here."

Kay, who had forgotten all about K.H.'s proof, said, "Yes? And why might that be?"

The man said, "You've come from the West to meet the men on the mountain."

With that he turned abruptly and walked through the open door, closing it behind him. Kay was startled, but she had the wit to hurry across the room after him. She opened the door and stepped into the hall to find that the man was nowhere to be found. He was simply gone.

The only other experience I know about that was remarkable was that one day in Madras, she was sitting at a stop light in a taxi when she looked out her window into the car next to her cab and saw that the driver was a man who very much resembled the picture Blavasky had had drawn of K.H. Kay was somewhat sensitive to auras, and when, according to Kay, the man looked directly at her, it was as though he dropped the veil from over his own aura, allowing her to see a radiance of such exquisite power and beauty that it dumbfounded her. Trying to explain the experience to someone else was, according to her, like trying to explain light to a blind person—it was the ultimate *you had to be there* kind of thing. Nevertheless, she said it happened and, by the time I heard about it, I had had enough inward stuff happen to me personally to have no reason to doubt her.

The real kicker was after the fact when Kay rather embarrassingly asked K.H. during one of their later sessions if he had been the one in the car. He amusingly replied, "What's the matter? Did you think I don't know how to drive?"

When Kay returned from her trip, she still had no idea what her work was to be. Nevertheless, within a short period of time, people just began appearing at her doorstep in need of counseling.

First, it was Becky, Kay's friend, next-door neighbor and fellow traveler. She was having problems with her husband. What was interesting was that as she was confiding to Kay, K.H. came through to help with the counseling.

If it had been twenty years later, people probably would have mistaken what Kay was doing for channeling, though it clearly wasn't that kind

of thing. In channeling, a psychic goes into a trance and is taken over by . . . whatever. Kay was wide awake. She would make a mental connection, then simply repeat what she heard coming through from the Teacher.[17] As part of her training had been to learn to recognize the tone around the voice that was coming in, she knew who she was in contact with. At all times, she was in complete control. If anything came through that she didn't feel comfortable with, she was told by the Brothers that she should exercise her free will and cut things off. She never had to do that, but the alternative was there.

Becky was in real estate and had a gaggle of clients. In a relatively short time, a number of them began coming to Kay for counseling about personal problems, though never about business. In each case, one of the Teachers would come through. Their message was generally uplifting and definitely down to earth. The main focus would be on motives, on how the individual was dealing with life, and in what ways the individual could break the more destructive patterns within the self. Past lives were occasionally talked about, but that was only done so the individual might better understand why he or she was in the situation they found themselves. The main thrust was always toward dealing with life now in a spiritually skillful way.

As one might expect, Kay took no money for any of this. As more and more people came to Kay for counseling, a progressive movement of people began clamoring for more formal gatherings at which the Teachers might speak. Thus began what would come to be known as *the meetings*.[18] [19]

The meetings as gatherings were not publicized but were open to anyone who knew about them and wanted to come. They were initially held twice a month, one meeting at Kay's house and one meeting at the home of a friend on the west side of Los Angeles.

Getting to the point where this could happen was no small feat. Kay's house was a very small, two bedroom, Spanish style home. To make it into

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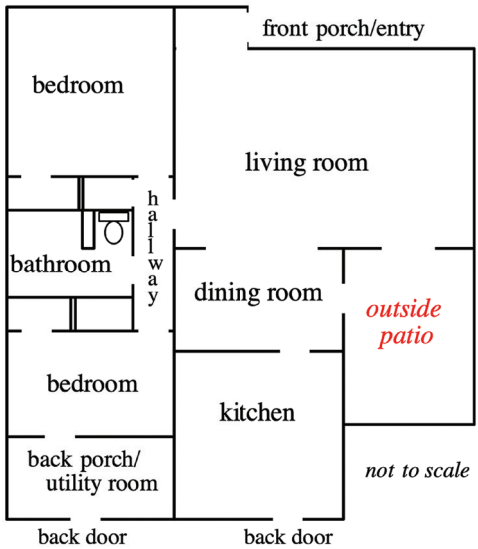
[17] Remember, this was in early 1970s, long before people were talking about *spirit guides* (which this was *not*—with a spirit guide, the "spirit" is on the other side—again, not the same thing).

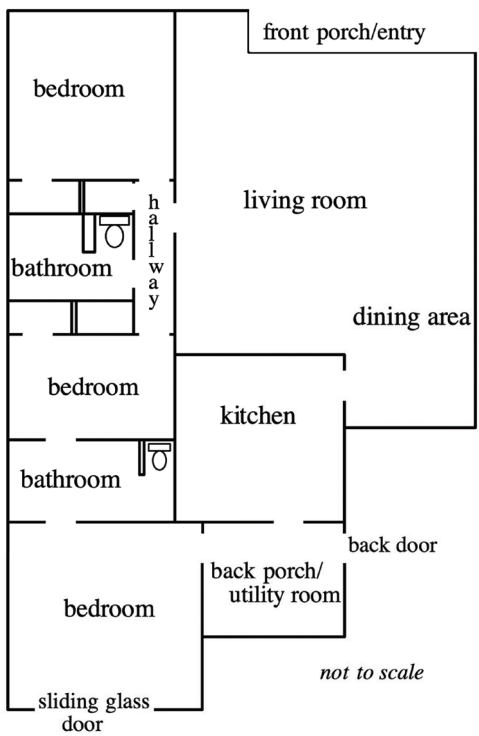
[18] It was at one of these meetings that Jess Stearn, the guy in whose book Mom found Kay's name, heard Kay.

[19] As for the money part, when the meetings became more public, people began leaving a few dollars on a table as they left. That money was usually used to buy tapes for the tape recorder that was used to record the sessions, and to pay for the transcription of the tapes.



a place where a fair number of people could assemble, changes had to be made.

The first layout (sketch to the left) shows the house (not exactly to scale, but close) before it was renovated. The second layout (below) shows the changes that were made. I now own the house (I bought it from Kay's estate when she died), so those of you who know me and have been to my home will attest to the considerable space there is in the combination living room/dining room area. This was created when the wall between the living room and dining room was removed to create one area, and the adjoining outside patio area was thrown in for good measure. On nights when there were meetings, the entire room would be filled with seated listeners.



On those nights, a Teacher would come, would identify himself, would set the tone for the discussion and then would talk to the assembly for about an hour. At the end he would open things up for a question/answer period. They didn't generally answer personal questions directly, especially if the topic was trivial. They did have a knack, though, for taking really dumb questions and answering them in a way that was, if you were listening, enlightening. The attitude of

most of the individuals in attendance was reverential. The tone one came away with after having attended one of the meetings was like nothing I had ever experienced.[20]

In the beginning—it was the early 1960's long before I met Kay—Kay met Zandrah Ralphs whose husband was from the Ralphs grocery store family. Zandrah was so moved by what she heard in one of the one-on-one meetings that she approached Kay with the suggestion that they create a non-profit umbrella organization dedicated to helping small, under-financed, service-oriented organizations. Kay liked the idea and TRY was born.

Through the next several years, TRY extended its non-profit status to a child development center in Watts, an American Indian scholarship program, a program to help ex-cons get jobs after being released from jail, a community service project that brought water and sanitation to a village in Mexico, and more. It raised money through a boutique it ran in Hollywood, and it brought Kay into contact with a moneyed group of people.[21]

It was also during the time that TRY was operating that a small, special group of people would gather regularly at Kay's house to meditate for people in need. It was this group that helped my mom deal with her problem.[22]

Mom took me to one of Kay's meetings during the Easter break of the year all hell broke loose in the form of the *I'm one of the bad guys* episode. As it was Kay and company who had been able to shake loose the astral invasion my mom had to deal with, Mom wanted me to meet her.

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[20] When I first started attending the meetings, the reaction I had was like having my child-self go to sleep leaving nothing but my higher-self in evidence. It was quite remarkable.

[21] In fact, one of Kay's entries in her diary during that time was the comment that she thought Albert would howl with laughter if he knew about the rich and powerful people with whom she was rubbing elbows.

[22] Because I came along quite a bit after all of this, I never met most of the people who were in that meditation group. What's more, I just assumed the individuals in the group were the main players in helping mom out (I remember Kay talking about a woman in the group named Malya, who had been the wife of Dane Rudhyar—she was, according to Kay, quite something in a psychic sense). It wasn't until considerably after the fact that it dawned on me that the reason that particular meditation group was so powerful (remember, mom could tell when the group was working for her because the voices would null out and the encroachers would just seemingly disappear) was because it had the Brothers behind it (and, most probably, had at least one chela actively helping out, even if only in the background).

My first sight of Kay was as she opened her front door to greet us. What first struck me was that she was short, fairly round, had a pleasant face, but also had a severe indentation over her right eye. She was very cordial.

Mom and I stuck around to talk after the meeting. I don't remember the ins-and-outs of the conversation, but I do remember leaving feeling quite good about the situation. I had to depart for school within a few days, so I didn't see Kay again during that holiday. I returned to ASU, finished my course work, graduated, then returned for summer vacation.

I had no idea where I was going to get a job—tens of thousands of engineers in aerospace were being laid off that year—but I was happy to be done with school and on with my life.

Minor point: You can now understand why I didn't want anyone to read this autobiography before I died. Telling people that there are highly evolved spiritual individuals in this world—you know, the Buddhas—and that I've had contact with them through Kay for upwards of twenty-five years, that's just a bit much. Most people wouldn't have believed me, anyway, and for those who did . . . what would I do with them? It just wasn't something I felt comfortable copping to. And besides, I knew that between this autobiography and the E.Phil book, people who might be interested would have plenty to chew on . . .

Chapter 7

From Graduation to Poly, Plus a Bit

My dad paid for my college education, so unlike many students today, I was fortunate enough to leave school with no debt. Still, I had no money after I got out of college, being a relatively normal graduate for the era, so I lived with my mom and sister for a time in Newhall.[1] Summer had always been relatively carefree for me. This summer was no exception. What was different was that I spent a lot of time in Pasadena with Kay.

It was always fun with Kay. She and I would often work in her yard together for several hours, then she'd make lunch and we would sit around her kitchen table and eat and talk. Sometimes, one of the Brothers would come and talk through her.

It wasn't that I needed counseling. It was just time to wake up. As much of a hellion as I had been when I was younger, temper and all, there was something in me that was ready to listen. I had a background. It wasn't anything spectacular. It wasn't like I'd been a high priest in the Temple of Ptah in ancient Egypt, and I certainly hadn't been a saint or anything grand. There had been lives, though, when I had set aside my own personal desires and instead devoted myself to the whole of life in very powerful situations.[2] I had had a tiny bit of training in ancient times . . . a tiny, tiny bit . . . and so had my compatriots. All who would come to join our small group over the next few years had been together as a group before (though obviously I didn't learn about this that first summer).

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[1] After divorcing my stepdad, mom went back to work as a kindergarten teacher in L.A. City Schools. She sold the Capistrano place and moved to Newhall with my sister. Interestingly (or sadly), given the information I gave at the end of Chapter 4, my sister managed to once again "run away," this time from the Newhall house, when I was there. By that time, the only thing that upset mom about the action was that Patty was still a minor and mom was still responsible for you. Patty hadn't changed much. She was still unhappy under the yoke of being a kid and really devoted to being on her own.

[2] Small point of order: When I was young, I was competitive, thoughtless and kind-of primitive in the way I dealt with life and people. In short, there were instances when I was not a very nice kid. Given where life has taken me, I find it remarkable that slumbering quietly underneath the surface of who I was at that time was this whole other side of me, waiting to awaken. How vast the self must be.

The group was an interesting mix. Several years before I came upon the scene, Kay had met Cathy. The two, I found out later, had a strong karmic link due to several previous lives in which they were family. In one, it seems, they worked together to write several books that you, if you are even passingly well read, would recognize. By the time I arrived, Kay and Cathy had been writing together this time around for a couple of years.

I briefly met Cathy at the first meeting I attended the summer following my graduation from college. She had been living in Santa Barbara near her parents but had moved down to Pasadena (she bought the house just down the street from Kay) specifically so she and Kay could write together. She was divorced, had two young girls and was very pretty. There was the TRY crowd and the additional people who came to the meetings, but Cathy was really the first of what could loosely be called *the inner group* that would ultimately gather around Kay and the Brothers' teachings.

I was the second to arrive. Kay had been told by the Brothers several months before my arrival that there was a young man who would be coming, who'd had a bit of a wild early life, but who would in all probability be of great help to her in the future as there was a karmic link there (again, I learned about *this* considerably later, like, years later).

More came with time. By the end of the first year there were six of us with a seventh looming.[3] The final three were all males and all healers

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[3] I say "looming" because the seventh, Bev, was raising her two kids down in Orange County for all of the early years our group was together and wasn't "around" much with the exception of the meetings. You won't be hearing from her from here on, but I did want to say something about her now.

Bev was a wonderful individual, a tiny sprite of a dynamo, a bit of a trailblazer and, as Mark's girlfriend said (Mark was her son), a definite bad ass. When Kay's fireplace showed signs of falling apart, it was Bev who arrived one Saturday and, using me as her assistant, rebuilt its brickwork (who knew that you had to soak the bricks in water before laying them because if you didn't, they would leach the water out of the concrete and the assembly wouldn't have the expected strength? . . . I sure didn't, but Bev knew). This, during a time when there probably weren't more than fifty women in the entire country who knew how to lay bricks. When the family's Chevy was in need and the local Chevy dealer botched the valve job, Bev redid it herself in her own driveway (then took the car back to the dealership to point out, in a kindly way, their deficiencies). In the 1950s, when TV was in its infancy and there was very little content for the few stations that were on air, Bev was one of the originals Roller Derby girls (being tiny, she was the gal who they would slingshot passed all the behemoths to get points during a match). She was one of the first Flight Attendants (I tell all my physics classes about my friend who, having poured out "coffee, tea or milk" in the galley of the DC-4 prop plane she was attendant on, stepped out of the galley into the aisle to see a ball of fire bouncing down the aisle coming right at her—she just stepped aside as it bounced on passed, hitting the wall and dissipating as would be expect of *ball*

of one sort or another. That was the core. Apart from the core group, there was also a pediatrician, a psychologist, a massage therapist and a PE teacher (she also acted as Kay and Cathy's book agent—odd, but she was very astute and wonderful at it). All had a strong devotion to the Brothers' work. All were good friends. Others came and went over the years.

The inner group didn't live together—it wasn't a commune[4]—but we

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lightning . . . pretty amazing, actually seeing ball lightning inside a plane . . .). She worked for *Civil Defense* and for *Search and Rescue* and was one of the first para-nurses, jumping out a plane to parachute in and minister medical aid to individuals who were in need in backcountry emergencies that were difficult to get too quickly. And when her daughter had a problem with the macula in her eye, Bev invented (and patented) a device to help her train her eyes to work right. Most of all, though, she was a naturopath and healer (which was right along the line of what we all had been trained to do in ancient times—she was the one Kay and Cathy took to Egypt as a healer on one of their trips when Kay wasn't feeling well). Sadly, she died of lung cancer several years after we-all came together (she had been a heavy smoker all of her life), but she was a force and very much a part of our inner group even though she wasn't in evidence much of the time.

[4] I always lived alone. Over the course of the twenty-five or so years we were together as a group, I lived: in a house next door to Cathy's that was owned by Peter, her brother; in an apartment on Mockingbird Lane in South Pasadena for a time (this was where I lived when my mom gave me my ten speed bicycle for Christmas the first year I taught at Poly—I rode that bike to school for thirty-nine years before it finally died—this was also the apartment I was living in when I got my Master's degree in Physics AND it was three blocks from where mom lived after she left Newhall); in a house on Kay's street that was owned by my step-dad; and in the garage-turned-artist studio-turned bungalow on Kay's property. I ended up in the bungalow for an interesting reason. Because Kay and Cathy were writers, they had little income (though Cathy's parents were wealthy and, I think, helped her out some). Cathy and I were helping Kay make ends meet. I was also paying rent to my stepdad for the house on Kay's street where I was living. Kay needed a new roof over her studio (it was a flat roof and leaked badly). In fact, one weekend when Kay and Cathy were at a conference, I was charged with looking after the house. It was raining, so I went to the bungalow to be sure everything was still dry. As I stepped into the room, a four by eight-foot segment of the ceiling just kind-of hinged downward dumping probably 500-gallons of water that had accumulate on the roof straight into the room. It was hilarious. After the fact, I got the bright idea to: extend one side of the building upward six feet making the roof slanted; make a loft in the extended region at the top of the slant; then move into the studio and pay Kay rent. It killed two birds with one stone—my outlay was less per month and Kay had a legitimate income. I lived there for nine years. When Kay died, she left me $50,000 to repay all I had given her. I used that money as part of a down payment to buy the house from Cathy to whom Kay had bequeathed the property. Cathy gave me an additional $50,000, interest-free loan that wasn't due until I sold the house (if I *ever* sold the house) so I could buy the house, because she wanted me to have the place and being a lowly teacher knew I couldn't have bought it otherwise. (I paid her back with interest when my dad died and left me some money in his estate a few years later.) Kay died in 1998, so I've lived in or behind

did eat dinner together. I don't remember when it started, but we evolved a dinner plan that essentially had each member cooking one night a week.

I, for instance, would cook on Friday night. Cathy cooked on Saturday, Kay on Sunday, Brian on Thursday, etc. Wednesday was our free day, but even then we would usually go out as a group and eat together somewhere in town.

On my night, I would buy the food, cook it at Kay's (before I moved onto the street, I lived across town and Kay's was a more convenient place for everyone), call people to come when it was time to eat, and serve it ... or put it on the table, anyway. Everyone lived within five or six houses of one another, so everyone would arrive fairly quickly upon being called. We'd eat and talk and laugh and generally have a good time, and when it was over everyone would get up and leave and I would clean up. I did this once a week, every week, for twenty-five years.

I dearly wish I had videotaped some of those dinners. Everyone in the group had a sense of humor, so along with being generally intelligent and thoughtful, the group could be explosively funny. There were times when I laughed so hard that I nearly cried . . .

It was a remarkable boon I had fallen into, having the companionship of friends who were so truly pleasurable to be around. I knew it wasn't an accident, but I nevertheless felt blessed. That, and having contact with the Brothers . . .

Early on, Kay suggested that it might be a good idea for me to keep a diary.[5] I didn't consider myself a very good writer and I couldn't visualize a time when I might want to know *what* happened *when*, so although I tried, I didn't do a very good job of it and the attempt kind of petered out. It is funny how many books I've since written.[6]

Kay's home for around thirty-five years now and have probably ridden my bike to work at Poly up and back San Pasqual Rd around 10,000 times since moving there. I do enjoy my morning ride, especially when it's raining. Life (and karma) has been very good to me.

[5] In looking back, given what you are reading right now, I suspect this may have been something the Brothers told her to suggest to me.

[6] In thinking back, my writing conceit started out amusingly. When I was a young kid—somewhere around the fourth grade—I got a wild urge to write a book. It was kind of a Nancy Drew type mystery about an old watchtower. Unfortunately, I wasn't very patient and I had no idea how to go about creating a plot, so each page had one sentence on it, and each page was designated a chapter. I think the book had twelve chapters total, which meant there were twelve pages and twelve sentences in the whole thing. I have to say, the project was exhausting. I found it much easier playing football all afternoon than being a

At one point, Kay and Cathy designed a museum exhibit centered on death and dying. It was called *Continuum: The Immortality Principle*. It found a home for nine months in the *Museum of Science and Industry* in Los Angeles. How it ended up there is a wonder, but it did. Although Kay and Cathy were the creative brains behind the exhibit, we all were given the opportunity to have some input into the end-product, and we all helped to physically put it together. (Google it and you'll find that the exhibit had quite an interesting *after-Kay-and-Cathy* life. Also, you can still find the book that went along with the exhibit on Amazon.)

Various members of the group traveled together at various points in time. The only trip I took with Kay and Cathy was to Italy. Additionally, the people who went on that trip were Brent,[7] Cathy's brother Peter, and Cathy's older daughter Alex. We visited some pretty amazing places—the standard tourist places like Venice and Florence and Rome along with some very special places in a spiritual sense like Assisi and the place of the oracle at Cuma in Italy near Naples. Occasionally, one of the Brothers or one of the chelas would come and talk through Kay about the place we were seeing.[8] [9]

Within a few years of my arrival, Kay whittled her two public Brothers meetings per month down to just one. What wasn't generally known was that the core group was additionally having one quiet meeting once a week on Sundays. In them, one of the Brothers would come and speak to us. The talks almost always left me thinking about how I was dealing with

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writer.

[7] He was one of the healers in the group. He left several years later and went off to Louisiana (as I remember) to start his own medicinal herb company, Wildwood Botanics, which morphed into a company whose name I don't remember.

[8] In the ancient world, it was accepted that there existed oracles, devic-like Beings who could sense lines of karma and foresee the future. Each oracle spoke through a priestess, called a Sybil. When we were in Italy, we visited the place of the Cumaean oracle in Cuma to the south of Naples. The Sibylline Books (nine prophetic books) came from the Cumaean oracle. This is the Kali Yuga, the age of iron, the heaviest time in the spiritual cycle we are all a part of, so the oracles have long since gone silent. But that doesn't mean those Beings are no more. They wait patiently to reemerge when the cycle begins its upward swing. The oracle at Cuma was named Cleomese, and when we were there Kay was able to contact that very benevolent Being. Its message to us was simple: "I live from age to age, you but an hour. Take up *the path*; it will lead you where you need to go."

[9] The rest of the traveling I've done—to India, Egypt, Greece, Europe, Canada and Mexico—I've done by myself.

life, or what it meant to be a human being, or where I wanted to go in life, or how I should deal with the consequences of my actions.

It was a time of deep inner thought. During those meetings, there was a tone that would wash over me. I couldn't artificially reproduce it or explain it, but it was as though my child-self just went to sleep and the highest in me came forth. It was remarkable . . .

As I said, my first contact with Kay and the Brothers was during Easter vacation of my last year in college. I'm not sure it was evident from what I wrote earlier, but after leaving that meeting and during those last few months at ASU and the summer that followed, my level of introspection rose precipitously. I began having little enlightenments that were not, in the grand scheme of things, huge, but that I nevertheless found quite significant within the confines of my small self. Aside from being more thoughtful and kindly, there were not many outward manifestations of what was happening to me internally.[10] Toward the end of that first summer, the rate at which these little enlightenments came slowed considerably. Still, from those happenings I had first-hand experience in feeling what it was like to have *myself* move into harmony with Myself and the Whole.

A few years later, when the private meetings began, I began again to have those little enlightenments. During that period, very small, subtle things would show themselves as immensities. It was not something I could really talk much about. Still, my inward world grew hugely during that period.

This all happened during the first five or six years of my time with Kay, the group and the Brothers, and was the general, underlying, after-college "stuff" my students had been so curious about for so many years.[11]

At this point, for the readers who don't know me personally, I am going to take a small detour to fill in a few gaps. I will get back to the Brothers and *the group* in short order. In the meantime, I need to say a

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[10] One manifestation: I became a vegetarian overnight after the Brothers talked in that first meeting about humanity's immense karmic debt to, as they put it, *our younger brothers*. Interestingly, when it was dinner time that next night, it was just obvious to me that meat was out. Mom, who heard the same talk, was surprised by my stand. She clearly hadn't resonated with what was said in the same way I had.

[11] It is 2013 as I edit this, but I wrote this *footnote* in 2007: It is interesting that the students I've had in class over the last two or three years have had absolutely no curiosity about me whatsoever—nothing at all like it was in the 80's and 90's. I know why. I'll talk more about this later.

little more about what happened to me in a worldly sense just after graduating from college.

Toward the end of the after-graduation summer, the money issue became a little more pronounced. My high school friend, Mike, had gone to UC Santa Barbara and while there had managed to completely mess his mind up with drugs. He hadn't totally flipped out yet, but he was on the edge.[12]

Mike's dad was a neurosurgeon who owned a couple of four-story apartment buildings in Pasadena. He offered Mike and me work if we wanted to paint them. We did.

The surface area of each was 25,000 square feet. We did them twice with nothing more than rollers and paintbrushes. If we'd been bright, we'd have used spray guns, but we weren't, so we didn't. As a consequence, it took us a couple of months to do the job. By the time we *were* done with the 100,000 square feet of painting, I had decided what I did NOT want to do for the rest of my life.

In thinking about a career, I knew engineering was out. The year I graduated, tens of thousands of engineers were laid off from the aerospace industry. Even if that hadn't been the case, no company in its right mind would have hired me with my dashing 2.06 GPA out of college.[13] As an electrical engineer, I would have been a disaster.

I had actually decided in my junior year, though, that what I really wanted to do was teach. There were a few times I had tutored while in college and seemed to be pretty good at explaining things to people. I also had enjoyed the enterprise. I scouted around and found a program at Mount St. Mary's College in L.A. that would allow me to finesse my electrical engineering degree into a lifetime California State Math/Science Teaching Credential. I got my credential and began teaching as a substitute, then long-term substitute in Los Angeles City Schools (LACS).

I certainly did have contact with nice kids during the two-year period that followed in LACS, but in general I was dealing with students who viewed teachers as *the enemy*. In the hope that I might be able to leave the fray and teach in a less tense junior college setting, I decided to get

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[12] At one point a little later in life, Mike did flip out, threw his six-foot-two-inch, 250-pound father across their kitchen, and maintained to anyone who would listen that his real parents were Liz Taylor and Richard Burton. The last time I saw him several years ago, he had become a homeless street person in Pasadena.

[13] Along with the learning disabilities, undergraduate college was an opportunity *NOT* to restrain my personal life, hence at least some excuse for my miserable academic showing.

a Master's degree in Physics. The program I entered was at Cal State, Northridge.

My first semester was a bit of a thrill. I, of course, knew almost no physics—a particularly bad characteristic for someone entering a graduate level program in the subject. That's not to say that I hadn't *taken* physics at ASU. My E.E. program required some and I did try hard to understand the material. Unfortunately, my learning disabilities made for pretty miserable comprehension and retention. I floundered a lot.

In any case, I entered the graduate school coursework with fervor, knowing that I would have to learn both graduate and undergraduate physics at more or less the same time. I still had my learning disabilities, but I was motivated.

That was all well and good until the end of the first semester when some really teeth-chattering things happened.

The world of physics is split into two bailiwicks. Theoretical physicists deal with theory. Experimentalists generate and execute experiments designed to support or find fault with the theory. One of the two classes I took that first semester was in Classical Newtonian Mechanics. The man who was scheduled to teach the class was an experimentalist. He was doing the course because it was the last hoop he had to jump through to get tenure at the university.[14] Unfortunately, this man was not only a lousy teacher, he was also an exceptionally bad theoretician. As this was a major problem for someone charged with presenting theoretical physics to graduate students, this poor soul was on the ropes from the word *go*.

His approach, I'm quite sure, was to skim the text for the material to be discussed before coming to class, then regurgitating back at us what he had just read. I know this because he followed the book meticulously, and as soon as someone ventured a question that wasn't directly related to the section being covered, he would be lost.

There was a huge uproar from some of the graduate students taking the class about the man's seeming incompetence. This wasn't just because a lot of the students felt that this would be their last shot at addressing and understanding the material's nuances. The guy who normanlly ran the course wasn't happy about not teaching the class that semester, and in what I think was a *suck-up* move, some of the students were amplifying his irritation. Their claim was that they wanted someone leading the course who knew what he (or she) was doing, and that wasn't the current professor.

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[14] Often the lines between experimental and theoretical physics get blurred. In this case, that wasn't the case. This guy was very much into the experimental side of physics.

The university didn't want to make waves, so instead of removing the man from his class, thereby ruining his chances for tenure,[15] they simply opened another section of the course and allowed everyone in the original section the option of transferring. Everyone took the option except the one student who was absent the night the offer was made.[16] He and the hapless professor ended the semester together.

The professor who ran the second class was an Austrian named Lengel. Being the man who usually taught the course, he definitely knew what he was doing. He was also very precise, very Germanic, and very unamused by students who weren't *with it*. I transferred with the rest of the students when the opportunity presented itself, but in doing so I knew I was entering a situation that had the potential for disaster . . . which dovetails nicely into a small wrinkle associated with that first semester.

Everyone who was accepted into the graduate program had to take an entrance exam in undergraduate-level Classical Newtonian Mechanics. The test was required. It was the school's way of screening out anyone who didn't belong in the program.

I, of course, having a degree in electrical engineering, had had one semester of Newtonian Mechanics but hadn't been required to take the more advanced courses that were normal for physics majors. That meant I had no idea what a Hamiltonian was or how to use the Lagrangian technique to analyze problems.

I knew I was going to have trouble passing that undergraduate exam the first time around, but I also knew I could take it as often as I'd like. The bottom line was that sometime during that first semester, I was expected to give that test a try.

Lengel, being the resident expert in Newtonian Mechanics, was both the author of the mandatory undergraduate exam and its grader.

So back to the graduate course and my first semester.

The final exam in Lengel's graduate-level class was *oral*. That meant each student in the class had the thrill of being grilled by this old bugger until he (the old codger) was satisfied that the student either knew the material well enough to be afforded at least a *B* in the class, or not.[17]

My attempt at this oral exam happened on a Tuesday. I bombed it completely. Fortunately for me, Lengel knew that I was a teacher. He also knew I had not been in school for several years. His paternal side, such as

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15 In fact, he got tenure the next year.

16 How's that for interesting karma.

17 In graduate school, a *C* is a fail.

it was, took over and he afforded me a second chance. I was to come back in three or four days and try again.

It just so happened that on the Friday coming up, I had to take the three-hour *undergraduate* exam. I had put it off as long as I could, but this was the end of the semester and that marked the end of my procrastinating. That test was to start at 9 A.M. and ended at noon. Lengel would proctor it. He would also grade it.

Between Tuesday and Friday, all I did was eat, sleep, and breathe graduate and undergraduate level Newtonian Mechanics. Friday arrived and I drove to Northridge. I tried hard on the undergraduate exam but finished at noon knowing that I would be lucky to get a 20 out of 100 on it.[18] This was not good.

What was worse was that it dawned on me that if I flunked the undergraduate exam, Lengel would realize that I had no idea how to negotiate the mathematical techniques expected of mere undergraduates and would, as a consequence, *never* allow me to pass his graduate level course. This was worrisome for two reasons.

First, failing one of my first two graduate level courses seemed like really bad form. Second, I actually had a chance of passing Lengel's oral exam. The undergraduate material was all about mathematical techniques. The graduate material was all theory. I had essentially memorized the entire book for the graduate class, so there was a pretty good chance that I might be able to bullshit my way into a *B*, assuming Lengel hadn't decided beforehand that I had to go down.

So there I was, turning in my undergrad test at noon. As I handed the exam to Lengel, I did the best I could to mask the panic in my voice and I asked if I could take the oral exam right after lunch . . . which is to say, *before he had a chance to grade the undergraduate test*. Karma must have wanted me to pass that class because, with a smile, he said *yes*.

I went in at 1 P.M. and managed to answer all of his questions knowledgeably. He gave me the *B*, then went home to grade the undergraduate tests. Knowing what I knew about his temperament, I was very happy I wasn't around when he got done with mine. I had hoodwinked him, he knew it, and I'm sure he wasn't amused about it.

I did, for the record, finally pass the undergraduate test. It took three tries. I got a 65 on it that last time. Lengel predictably grumbled that the school's standards were slipping by allowing someone with so low a score to pass the test, but the norm had been set years earlier and I made the

[18] I needed a 65 to pass.

grade by the skin of my teeth.[19]

While I was a graduate student, I worked at CSUN as a lab assistant. I also worked with LACS as a home-school teacher dealing with students in body casts or on dialysis, etc. By my last year in the Master's program, Kay and the group were a big part of my inner life. Even though that was the case, I still didn't know where I was going in my outer life. It bothered me. Nobody likes uncertainty. (This was a good year before I got the job at Poly.)

During that period there was a chela on the other side who occasionally came through Kay to talk to us. He was a very interesting character. He had been a Scot the last time around and had kept that persona for when he was working with people on this side of the line. His name had been Rolf McKenzie. He had been a piper who died at the Battle of Culloden. He often came when we were sitting around the dining room table talking.

Rolf told me three stories over a period of time that stuck with me

[19] For those of you who wonder, I *do* now understand Classical Newtonian Mechanics. I kept plinking away at it during my graduate years, but when I really learned it was the first year I taught at Poly (we aren't there yet--it's coming). As an aside, though, nothing went right that first year at Poly. One of the highlights of the disaster was that every imaginable misconception I had about physics was laid bare for all my students to see. It's a wonder I wasn't fired. Fortunately, I was tenacious. Every time I ran into something that messed me up, I'd go home and fight with it until I got it right (this was before the Internet, so I had to do all the thinking on my own), then I'd go back to class the next day and set things straight. In a way, it was a good thing. In thinking fairly deeply about the things that messed me up, I got insight into the kinds of things that could mess *students* up. Karma was nudging me hard, but not so hard that I fell out of the tree.

One other thing about that Master's Degree: About ten or fifteen years after I started at Poly, I talked the folks at Caltech into letting me teach one of their Physics 1 Recitation Sections. Every freshman took Physics 1. The Lectures were given by Professors and were all theory. The Recitations were where students got to ask questions. The year I was there, every individual doing my job other than me was a tenured professor, including one gentleman who worked on "the bomb" at Los Alamos during WWII, and one gentleman who later won a Nobel Prize (Politzer—2004 for the discovery of asymmetric freedom in quantum chromodynamics). These guys were very secure within themselves. It wasn't unusual for one of them to show up to our weekly meetings and say, "Anyone able to figure out Problem 3 on the homework. I can't for the life of me see how to do it." Very refreshing! This was also where I met Sterl Phinney, the guy who taught the Special Relativity quarter (and a soon-to-be Poly parent). He was a very nice guy who helped me a lot with that section (and if you ever take a class like that, get the original version of *SpaceTime Physics* by Taylor and Wheeler. It has every imaginable Special Relativity question *with solutions*.)

Finally, I must have done OK that year because I started out with 15 students and ended up with 45, this being approximately a quarter of the class (the kids could choose which Recitation section they'd attend; word of mouth was a big part of how they chose.)

over the years, and that have more meaning for me now than then.

The first happened while I was getting that Master's degree in Physics (while I was so *up in the air* as to what I might be doing after school). My program required that I either do some kind of research project or take a comprehensive oral exam before getting my degree. Even though I had gotten fairly good grades while in graduate school, I was not feeling terribly comfortable with the exam option because I knew there was a lot of stuff I still didn't really understand.

On the other hand, there really wasn't much in the way of research options open to me. I had talked to the only two professors at CSUN who were experimentalists and had decent equipment at their disposal, but I didn't know anything about either of their fields of interest.

So we were sitting around the dining room table one night, talking about all of this, when Rolf arrived through Kay and proceeded to tell a story.

When he was young, there was an old guy in his village who made up a kind of moonshine that was wildly popular. People were always trying to get him to give up the recipe. Finally, he did give it to a select few.

When these chosen few got the recipe, they realize that there were all sorts of things in the brew that they didn't personally like . . . so they rejected the things they disliked and preceded to make their own version of the concoction. To their surprise, what they all ended up with just didn't taste right.

The intertwining of disparate ingredients was what gave the brew its character, and that was what made the stuff so good.

When he was done with the story, Rolf turned his attention to me and said in his Scottish brogue, "You need to mix up a brew inside yourself with such broad and disparate ingredients that you become interesting to all kinds of people, because you will be working with the young, and you will need to attract all kinds to you."

I said *thank you*, but I didn't really understand the import of what he was saying. In fact, I was at that point trying very hard to put myself into a position where I *wouldn't* have to work with *the young*. I had taught in L.A. City Schools for four years and really wanted to work with older students in a junior college setting where the resident population didn't view educators as carriers of the plague. I had no idea that a place like Poly even existed.

In the end, I decided to take the oral exam. It was a major undertaking because, as I said, there was so much I didn't understand. I essentially

memorized the texts for each of the four major topics I was to be tested on and was able to more or less fake my way through the ordeal. (It is amazing how much I've learned since then.)

With my Master's degree in Physics in hand, I spent the next year as a part time instructor in physics at Cal State Northridge, during which time I additionally took classes in Western Philosophy. My new goal was to get a PhD in Western Philosophy and, hopefully, move on to teaching at the university level.

At the end of that year at Northridge, I was almost positioned to begin taking graduate level classes in Western Philosophy . . . but not quite. My hope was to make up the deficit by taking courses at USC at night, then move on from there.

I didn't have much money and I knew I was going to have all sorts of free time during the day, so in an attempt to deal with both situations at once I called a few private high schools in the area to see if anyone needed a science teacher. As I didn't know a thing about private schools, I had no idea what I might or might not be getting into.

When I called Polytechnic School—Poly to those who know and Pasadena Poly to those who don't—it was after hours. I got the head of the Upper School, Mike Babcock, anyway. I asked if he needed *a science teacher* (in L.A. City Schools, you weren't a physics teacher or a chemistry teacher, you were just a *science teacher*) and he surprised me by asking in what area of science I was interested. I said *physics*. He said he just happened to have an opening.

It was a wonder they hired me. I'd had a beard during the summer. When I shaved it off, the last bit to go was the goatee on my chin. I, brainless soul that I was, decided the goatee looked good . . . so I kept it.[20]

I showed up for my interview, goatee and all, and did an acceptable job of presenting myself. There was, I was told, one other candidate who also had a Master's degree in Physics. I would have to wait for his interview to find out if I got the job.

It turned out that everyone in the science department wanted the other guy except one individual, Mab Voelkel. The man presented himself as a jack-of-all-trades who could teach anything and, I think, was a little full of himself. Mab, I believe, saw a little bit of herself in the guy and didn't like what she saw, so she held out for me. To break the stalemate, Mike took a little closer look at both of us by calling my references and his references, and apparently the fellow had had some questionable, personal,

[20] I looked like the Kentucky Colonel.

most probably inappropriate dealings with some of the female students at his previous school.

On a Thursday afternoon around 3 P.M., Mike called to welcome me to Poly's faculty.

It didn't take me more than a few weeks to realize that teaching at Poly was nothing like anything I had ever experienced. The kids were bright, yes, but they were also friendly. They said *hi* instead of turning their head away when passing me in the hallways. They were motivated to learn and do well. They were thoughtful not only toward their fellow students but also at an intellectual level. They were fun to talk to and fun to have fun with. It was teacher's heaven. I had fallen into teacher's heaven.

Within two weeks, I had completely jettisoned the idea of going back to graduate school. Poly was where I wanted to stay. Karma must have wanted me there, too, because I damn well nearly had the opportunity evaporate right out from under my nose.

My task that first year was to create a college level, Calculus driven, Advanced Placement (i.e., AP) Physics course from scratch. That meant:

—I had to find time to read the text (Halliday and Resnick) so that I would know what the students were running into when I gave reading assignments.

—I had to come up with quizzes to make sure the kids did the reading assignments, then find time to grade the quizzes. Of course, I had no time to proofread the quizzes, so there was always the possibility that they wouldn't make sense when I gave them out. Usually, they were loaded with errors.

—I had to choose fifteen or so problems from the *hundred and fifty* that were at the end of each chapter of the text, which meant I had to skim through all hundred and fifty problems, then write up solutions for the one's I'd selected so I'd have something to give my kids should they find themselves stumped. I had no time to proofread the solutions, so I had no idea whether they were going to make sense when I gave them out. Usually, they were loaded with errors.

—I had to create and write out (without the aid of a computer) a lab every week, each of which took, minimum, eight to ten hours to do. This assumed I'd found the time beforehand to check out the archaic equipment stored in the back room to see if any of it worked. This also assumed that if the equipment didn't work, I had the time and know-how to fix the problem(s). I had no time to proofread the labs, so I had no idea whether

they were going to make sense when I gave them out. Usually, they were loaded with errors.

—I had to find time to grade the lab write-ups, write-ups that often took students two to four hours to complete (which is to say, there was a lot there to grade).

—I had to write up tests. I had no time to proofread the tests, so I had no idea whether they were going to make sense when I gave them out. Usually, they were loaded with errors.[21]

—I had to find time to grade the taken tests.

—I felt compelled to think up demonstrations to illuminate the material being covered.[22] Because I didn't have time to try them out before doing them in front of the class, *not a single one of the demonstrations I created and presented that first year worked*.

—And last but certainly not least, I occasionally attempted an unprepared lecture on a topic I thought I understood only to find that, indeed, I didn't really understand it at all.[23]

In short, ABSOLUTELY NOTHING WENT RIGHT THE FIRST YEAR. Thank God (or karma or whatever) that Mike Babcock, then Upper School Head, was on sabbatical that year. If he hadn't been, I'd have been fired for sure. Fortunately for me, I spent the entire summer thinking and rectifying so that by the beginning of the second year when Mike came back and saw me in action, I was actually competent.

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[21] In fact, at one point I gave a take-home test that was impossible. I'm not just saying it was impossibly hard, I mean it was IMPOSSIBLE . . . as in, couldn't be done. Students spent hours trying to figure out why they couldn't get an answer that wasn't nonsense.

[22] On the first day of class, I told the students that physics was a difficult topic, especially when it gets abstract, and that I would be showing them a demonstration a day to animate the ideas and help them visualize what the physics was suggesting. It was three months before I had time to set up and present the first classroom demonstration . . . and of course, it didn't work.

[23] As I hinted at earlier, about halfway through a period, a kid would ask a question. I'd take my best shot at answering it. Other kids would question the answer and we'd be off and running. It wouldn't take long before it became obvious that I really didn't have things dialed in (my ignorance laid bare). I'd finally have to tell the kids that I needed to think more about the situation, and that I'd get back to them the next day . . . which I always did. It was quite humiliating. Interestingly, though, it did a nice job of animating the difference between taking a physics class as a student—i.e., understanding the material well enough to merely pass tests—and truly understanding a topic well enough to fully explain it to someone else. (Another interesting note: When I've subsequently run into alums from that year and mentioned what a disaster it was, they haven't remembered it that way. Their recollection has been that the year went smoothly and everything was great.)

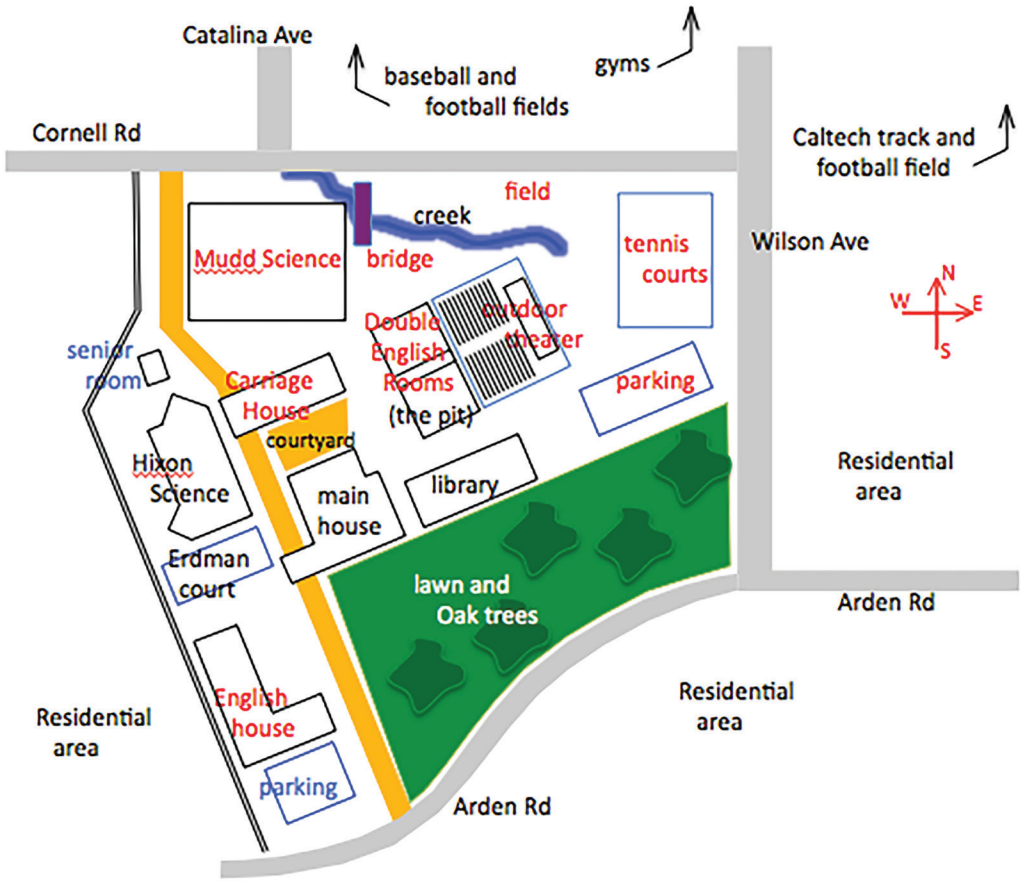
My first school year at Poly was 1978-79. At that time, the *Lower School* and *Middle School*, both of which had physically been a part of Caltech's campus in the early part of the twentieth century, comprised what was called the *north campus*. To the south of the *north campus* was a huge playing field and gym. To the south across a narrow residential street (Cornell Rd) was what was called *the south campus* (none of this has changed to date.)

The *south campus* was a large estate that had been turned into the high school (the Upper School) in 1959. It included a beautiful, old, two-story house (first photo) that was the family residence of the previous owners (when I arrived it was called *the main house*—now it's called Haaga House), an expansive front lawn complete with huge, scattered oak trees (second photo),[24] and additional buildings that had been included over the years.

In the middle of the campus, sitting on "the courtyard," was *the carriage house* (third photo).[25] It housed the History department and was replaced by a two-story building (bottom photo) which

[24] In fact, the school's symbol is an oak tree.

[25] Source: Polytechnic School Archives, Pasadena, CA.



some alums now called *the ski chalet*.

A schematic of the school's general layout is shown above.

A driveway (shown in brown) ran north/south through the entire property. Standing on the *upper courtyard* (a brownish rectangle next to the driveway on the schematic) looking eastward (i.e., to the right), there was a landscaped drop-off of about fifteen feet. If you took the stairs to the bottom, you found yourself in what was called *the pit* where resided what was called *the Double English rooms*. Seriously misnamed (the rooms were used for math classes), these were two giant rooms that could be cut in half using a moveable partition that was built into each.

Adjacent to the Double English Rooms was an *outdoor theater* that resided over what had been the original house's original pool. This was

where we had our morning meetings.

For you newer Poly alums, clearly all of this was removed when the Garland Auditorium and Arts complex was built (complete with *park* area) in the Double-English/outdoor-theater area (in fact, all of the red-labeled buildings have been removed and/or replaced over the years).

I've included two photos of that park area. The first (above-left) looks from the courtyard east down *the drop-off*; the second looks south from an area close to the *new science/library complex*. It's really quite nice. At this point, the seniors have taken over the area next to Garland (on the left side of the second photo) for their own as the old *senior room* is no more. I have to say, they really do enjoy the space.

The original English building was at the front of the property and was an actual house (go back to the schematic). The last photo is of its replacement—a very nice, one-story building (you have no idea the lengths to which our neighbors went to

fighting our efforts to make it two-stories).

Just to the south of that building (to the left in the photo) was/is the San Marino city limit line.

The school's eastern boundary was/is Wilson Ave, and across that street were and still are several Caltech buildings along with its athletic field, track and gym/pool complex (again, look back at the schematic for all of this).

One of the main reasons I created the schematic was because I wanted to highlight a feature of the campus that I found completely charming when I first arrived. When it would rain, an underground stream would surface at the end of Catalina Ave and we would end up with a running creek entering the property where I've shown it on the sketch (go back to the school schematic). The stream would flow into a field area that had whippoorwills and other flora (it went back underground at the end of the field), and the biology classes would go out into the area regularly to take specimen for observation in class. I don't know if the school built it or it was a part of the original estate (probably a part of the original estate), but the consequence of this little bit of wildness was that to accommodate the situation, there was a wooden bridge one had to cross to enter the campus from Cornell Rd (look back on the schematic one more time). Being about six-people wide, it was made out of what looked like beefy, sturdy, railroad ties. It was *lovely*. It went bye-bye when we build the Garland Theater arts complex where the field, amphitheater and Double English Rooms had been (sad, but Lord knows it was justified as we needed that complex badly).

On a little different note, the year before I arrived, all the science classes were taught in the Hixon Science building. The chemistry classes were taught at the north end of the building (this room is currently being used by Jennifer Godwin Minto as the photography studio). There was a Lecture Hall with stadium seating at the south end of the building. In between there was one very nice, large room that was used for biology and one very long, narrow room (like 14'x60') on the west side of the building to which the physics classes had been relegated. The physics space reminded me a lot of standing in a bowling alley lane.

I arrived the first year the sciences had taken up residence in the new Mudd Science Building (back to the schematic). The rub was that the Hixon folks had given money to build the Hixon *Science* Building, the

understanding being that the sciences would be housed there. To accommodate that agreement (and because I wasn't there the previous year to stick up for myself), all the sciences moved into the new Mudd building except physics. I was put in the big room that had heretofore been used by biology, with the long, narrow, old physics room being made into my stock/storage room.

This was fine with me. The old bio room had a high ceiling, which meant I could hang all sorts of fun stuff from the overhanging beams (pendulum set-ups, springs, whatever), AND it had huge picture windows that looked out onto the courtyard. It was enormous. It was airy. It was light infused. It was central to the campus. It was, in short, a great room.[26]

It only lasted a few years, though. Mike Babcock, who was at the time not only the head of the Upper School but also a math teacher who was teaching one class in the Mudd Building, decided all the sciences should be in Mudd (which was reasonable), so I finally ended up there.

Different topic: When I arrived, there was no Arts building.[27] In fact, there was no real Arts Department with the exception of one drama teacher. The only auditorium on the entire campus—Gosney Hall (renamed *Founders Hall* after someone noticed that the man who gave the money for the hall—Mr. Gosney—was a champion of eugenics)—was located on the *north campus* (i.e., in the middle of the Middle School). That was where the spring musical and the Moulin Rouge (a very bawdy cabaret show the seniors put on at the end of each year) was held every year.

To get around the dearth of art options, Poly in the early 1980s devoted an entire week each year to what was called *Creative Arts Week*. During

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[26] Somewhat off-the-wall sidenote: At this point, Poly has a very well-staffed, efficient, professional maintenance department that is very proprietary when it comes to keeping the campus and rooms pristine (which is great). There was a maintenance department at Poly when I first arrived, but in general if you saw something that needed doing, you just did it yourself. I, for instance, noticed that there was graffiti on the frames of some of the high-standing tables that were used for labs in the room, so the summer before my first year of teaching I stripped, sanded and repainted those tables so they would look new for the beginning of classes. That was the way it was in the early years. If you saw something that needed to be done, you didn't go looking for someone else to do the work for you, you just did it yourself.

[27] This problem, as would be expected of a good private school, has long since been remedied. We now have a spectacular arts program, complete with an enormous arts facility, auditorium (Garland Theater) and faculty on the *south campus*. Student take their Arts classes rolled into the academic schedule, or during special periods during the day. It is quite a fine program. (And interestingly, for years Caltech used our facility for *its* Arts program.)

that time, classes were suspended and artisans of all kind were invited to campus to give the kids a taste of art-related culture. The first year I was there, the week culminated with the kids putting on the play *The Tempest* out on the front lawn (I remember being terribly impressed that they were able to memorize the entire play, execute the blocking out on the front lawn, then put on what appeared to me to be a very professional presentation at the end of the week). It was a very fun time, but it played havoc with the academic program. It also didn't satisfy the core problem—that we had no real arts department.

The daily schedule that first year was definitely a surprise. Classes would end at 12:45 pm on Fridays, apparently to give families the option of leaving town early before the traffic got bad (how many schools do you know of who accommodate *that* need?). Also, there was a seventy-minute lab period in the middle of every day from 11 A.M. to 12:10 P.M.

This lab period was problematic in that only about a fifth of the kids would be engaged in a lab on a given day. That meant that every day, four-fifths of the student body was foot loose and fancy free for that seventy-minute period before their half-hour lunch.[28] To fix the *students without something structured to do* problem before the Arts program came into existence, teachers were asked to present what were called *activities*. One teacher taught typing. One teacher organized what was essentially a giant football pool he called Superfan. One teacher taught a drawing class.

Activities were supposed to be fun and/or educational, but not necessarily both. I wasn't expected to present an *activity* because I taught labs during that mid-day period, but I had a free day and decided to teach a vegetarian cooking class that first semester. Every Thursday at 11 A.M., I'd have eighteen delighted young ladies who at least initially thought that vegetarian cooking was synonymous with dieting—a myth I disabused them of rather quickly—arrive at my doorstep. We would then go over to the kitchen in the English building, which was an actual house where the English classrooms now are, and whip something up for lunch. It was a very fun thing to do.

During the second semester, I offered an activity in Eastern Philosophy for seniors only. It was a time, on college campuses, when all sorts of cults and eastern-based philosophic organizations were sprouting up. Ten years earlier the Beatles had made their sojourn to the ashram of a guy

[28] Poly didn't and still doesn't require students to be in a Study Hall when they don't have a class.

who styled himself as "the greatest of the Rishis" (that is what "Majarishi" means). There were people like Yogi Bhashan running around trying to get people interested in things like kundalini yoga (which was spectacularly irresponsible, not to mention potentially dangerous). It was a time, in short, when bright, iconoclastic, good hearted young souls who knew absolutely nothing about the eastern philosophies and, more to the point, eastern metaphysics, could get themselves into all sorts of serious trouble by being, quite simply, nosey about the east . . . and that exactly fit the description of some of my students.

Put a little differently, as bright and intellectually curious as my seniors were, they had absolutely NO training or background in any of what they were about to run into when they got to college. Given that I *liked* my students, I saw that as a problem. A class in the Eastern philosophies seemed like an intelligent, reasonable thing to present, so that's what I did.

The first year I did the activity, I had four seniors sign up. They knew they'd get no grade for the time spent, but in the bargain they'd also have no tests, no quizzes, no papers, no readings and no homework. It was solely for their own amusement. All they had to do was come and listen to me talk about whatever Eastern-related topic I decided to broach, once a week for an hour. There was no real method in my madness as far as order of presentation. I just picked a topic a week and talked about it.

The second year, ten people signed up. The third year, I had eighteen. The fourth year, I had thirty.[29] The numbers stayed in that ballpark until the school increased its size to eighty per class at which time my average numbers went up to around forty per year. In other words, somewhere around half the senior class would take my activity every year.[30]

Poly students were (and still are) bright and inquisitive. When I first began at the school, they realized that I was different. In many cases, they wanted to know what made me tick. So as they listened and questioned and observed me, a kind of lore grew up around me as a person. I didn't actively, consciously try to engineer the view that emerged, but with time, what with the physics stories and college stories and E.Phil class, it be-

[29] This was out of a senior class of sixty-five. Interestingly, I know that during the twenty-five years I did those classes there were times when one of the Brothers or a chela was standing behind me (metaphorically speaking) with a hand on my shoulder, because what I was saying in response to questions the students were asking was profoundly wise, and I just can't imagine that it was me alone answering those questions with those insights.

[30] In the last few years the numbers have plummeted. I have a suspicion why. I'll talk about it later. (This note was written in 2005.)

came evident to my students that my life had followed several strains.[31]

- I was a jock. I played on a football team that won CIF when I was in high school. I still played football occasionally.[32] I was also a fairly good baseball/softball player with a good arm, and it didn't take me long to learn how to white-water kayak when the option arose on our senior trips to the Kern River.[33]
- I had a sense of humor that often took bizarre turns, but that was funny, anyway.
- I was an academician. I taught college level, Calculus oriented AP physics at Poly and one year taught a recitation section of Physics I at Caltech. I wrote the school's physics lab manuals. In later years, I wrote the AP physics text *Physics With Calculus*.(this, along with a separate Conceptual Manual that went along with the text).[34] I wrote a text for the Honors physics course that included electricity and magnetism through robotics, and I wrote a *physics for poets-like* book that covered Cosmology, Astronomy, Thermodynamics, Modern (nuclear) Physics, Classical Mechanics, Electricity and Magnetism, and Relativity (this book has long since gone by-by). Finally, at the request of my students, I wrote a book based on what I talked about in the Eastern philosophy class.[35]
- I was a guy who spent his college life, as was the case with many, having a wicked good time. I earned the *asshole of the month* award more times in my fraternity than any other active of my day. I was a

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31 And for the record, I am not all that impressed with myself even though what you are about to read is going to sound horribly egocentric. There is a method to the madness. At the end you will get *the why* of this section.

32 On class trips, when I'd inject myself into their pick-up games, it was always fun watching the reactions of my students when they would realize that even "old guys" can be lightning quick.

33 In later years, I also taught myself how to surf. This was when I was fifty-four.

34 The book was a two volume, 1300-page hardbound physics text. It was originally written for the sole use of my students, but in relatively short order I had other teachers wanting to use the book. As of 2004, there are twenty-five or so schools from Hawaii to the east coast using the text (it is, or at least was, on the AP recommended book list). In fact, assuming the school hasn't removed my Web page from its server, you can still download a free copy of it at http://faculty.polytechnic.org/cfletcher/.

35 It was called *Eastern Philosophy for Western Minds, A Search for the Jewel in the Lotus*, and it is the book I keep referring to in this bit of amusement. You should be able to download a copy of *that* book at the same URL listed above (i.e., at http://faculty.polytechnic.org/cfletcher/).

hard-drinking, womanizing,[36] athletic, party-going animal-house kind of guy who also, on the side, studied electrical engineering.

- As wild as my college days had been, by the time I got to Poly I was celibate. I was also a lacto-ovo vegetarian who didn't smoke, drink, or do drugs. Something happened after college that sent me in an entirely different direction. Nobody knew what that something was but there was a herd of folks who were curious about it all.

In short, by my tenth year at Poly, I was viewed as being way beyond eccentric. "Mr. Fletcher is," as one student put it, "kind of a quasi-Buddhist vegetarian physics-nerd athlete-type who behaves like a 25-year-old but is really 125 . . . though he doesn't look it."

As one 240-pound lineman on Poly's football team said to me one year, "As far as I can tell, you were a lot like me when you were in high school. Does that mean that when I grow up I am going to end up like you are now?"

SO WHAT'S THE POINT?

For the first twenty-five or so years of my Poly career, I was an interesting puzzle to my students. I didn't go out of my way to make it so, it just sort of happened. But looking back on things, it seems that Rolf was right on target. "You need to mix up a brew inside yourself with such broad and disparate ingredients that you become interesting to all kinds of people, because you will be working with the young, and you will need to attract all kinds to you."

It amazes me, looking back, but it seems I inadvertently managed to become exactly what Rolf suggested.[37]

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[36] They just assumed all of this. It wasn't something I actually told them.

[37] Off the wall: Laura Holmgren is a wonderful English teacher at Poly. She started an oral history project. I was the first interviewee. If you want to see me speak, the URL for the completed video is https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNWpPOvigV0. Also, the following URL http://faculty.polytechnic.org/physics/3%20A.P.%20PHYSICS%202009-2010/114._video_stuff/List%20of%20Fletch's%20YouTubes.html.will take you to a listing of the educational videos I made while at Poly. Of note is https://youtu.be/6uL1Vh4Y0Jc which sees me using a Woody Allen clip to animate the relativistic concept of measuring *time in meters*. Another is the video Richard and I did for the preamble to our joint AP Physics classes (https://youtu.be/XydGb5ulODg). Another is a comedic impersonation of a hick about to take the Honors Physics class (http://youtu.be/11cCPJMJ_K8). And lastly, when I retired the school was kind enough to generate a "Craig Fletcher Memory Page" where anyone who wanted to write something nice about me could. That page is at https://www.kudoboard.com/boards/ctQzNqos?token=cT0CAYNKiTE6jXKC#view.

Chapter 8

A Little Bit of Background

[The next three chapters are here to present some of the ideas the Brothers brought to my world. I knew very little about the heart of the eastern philosophies when I was young, and the little I did know was loaded with misconceptions. As I learned more and more, I ran into a problem. Because my view of the world changed from typically western to more eastern in tone, I found the need to bite my tongue when it came to discussions about race and woman's issues and religion and life and death. Why? Because I knew people wouldn't understand where I was coming from when I spoke and, as a consequence, would think me a veritable Cretan if I let loose. It was as though I was the guy who'd say, "The sum of the interior angles of a right triangle is 270°s," when everyone knew from Euclidean geometry that the sum was 180°s . . . except it *is* 270°s if your triangle is drawn on a sphere . . . so my sum isn't as crazy as it seems.

The point is, for me to let fly I need to know my reader(s?) have a background that is comparable to mine, and the only way to insure that is to present to you the major ideas *I* didn't know about when I started out (or, at least, some of them). I'm pretty sure this means you are about to run into some thoughts that are going to seem on the surface to be very off-the-wall. I'll do my best to be entertaining and maybe a little surprising in my presentation, and who knows, maybe even a little bit clever.]

During my time with Kay and the group, the Brothers almost never told us about things that were going on in the world that weren't widely known about but that would be important with time. An exception to that happened in October of 1981 during one of our small gatherings. They told us that as we spoke, there was a meeting going on in a hotel room in Cairo, Egypt, in which people were putting the final touches on a plan to do something very bad (those weren't their words, but that was the idea). The Brothers didn't say what it was, but they did say it would be apparent when it happened.

Three days later, Anwar Sadat, the president of Egypt and the leader of the first Arab nation to make peace with Israel, was assassinated during a military parade in Cairo.

The Brothers have sometimes been called *the guardians of humanity*, so for those who are just being introduced to them a natural question might be, "If, as the guardians of humanity, they knew what was going to happen to Sadat, why didn't they stop it or, at least, warn him?" Understanding the answer to that question requires preamble and background, which is what I'm about to give you. Kindly stay with me.

Taking a cue from my mom's certainty about my seventh-grade lying spree (which was an unfortunate delusion, if you will remember) and my conclusion from that experience that life does not always present to us the reality of a situation in a superficially obvious way, there are a few observations I'd like to make about "this place" as we get started. (The Brothers didn't make a big deal out of this, and this may seem a bit circuitous at the start, but hang in there as I'm including it for a reason.)

I'm going to start by trying to convince you that, quite literally, *NOTHING* around you in a physical sense is as it seems, and I'm going to do it by looking at what modern western science knows about *the atom*.

To wit, I give you the lowly atom.

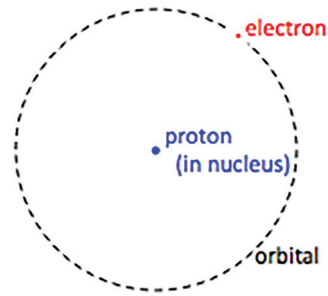
(BIG NOTE: If you know something about science, what I'm about to point out in the next few pages may seem a bit sophomoric. This is not intended to insult your intelligent or knowledge base. I'm doing this because I know there will be readers who are not so disposed. Please bear with me. If you fall into this "knowledgeable" category, I'm hoping you will find the later material and the material in the next chapters more interesting. Also, if you hit something that doesn't immediately make sense or that rubs you wrong, don't stew over it. Keep reading. Things will become clear with time. There is some very powerful stuff coming down the line.)

Being the building blocks of all physical matter, atoms are really, really tiny having a diameter on the order of 10^{-10} meters (that's .0000000001 meters). At that size, you could fit somewhere around 5,000,000,000,000 hydrogen atoms on the head of a pin (that's five million-million, or five trillion, or $5x10^{12}$, depending upon how you roll).

Smaller still are *protons* (these are electrically positive) and *neutrons* (these are electrically neutral) that exist at the center of the atom, which is called *the nucleus*, and the considerably smaller *electrons* (these are electrically negative) that exist in energy-defined *orbitals* outside the nucleus.

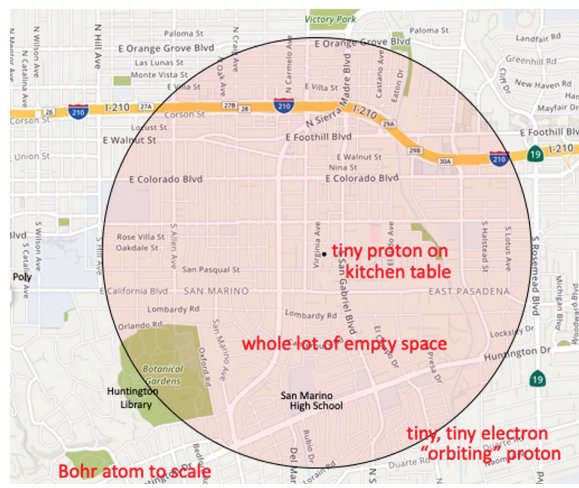
These electrons move with speeds upwards of *2.5 million meters per second* (that is around 1400 miles per second). It is this high speed coupled with the repulsive nature that electrons manifest when two electrons get close to one another that gives the atom its solid appearance.

Schematically, we could visualize the *simplest* of atoms, a hydrogen atom, as a *single proton* in a nucleus with a *single electron* "orbiting" in one of its energy levels (I've put the word *orbiting* in quotes because electron don't move in two-dimensional circles as shown or, in most cases, even on spherical surfaces—having noted that, the model I'm using here is a simplified version of the atom called *the Bohr model*, which is good enough for our needs).



Aside from the caveat I've just mentioned, what is deceptive about this picture is its scale. To begin with, protons are 1836 time more massive than electrons, so in our picture the proton should be a lot bigger. Even more distressing, though, is the misconception that is fostered by the spacing that exists *between* the proton and the orbiting electron. If we visualize the proton as *the size of a baseball* with everything else scaled up proportionally, and if the radius is accurately rendered for that situation, the orbiting electron should be found somewhere around *1.3 miles away from the proton*.

Consider that for a moment. I live in the county strip between Pasadena and San Marino. If this atom had been drawn to scale with that tiny, baseball-sized proton sitting on my kitchen table (see map to the right), that tiny, tiny, tiny electron would have circled in our Bohr atom *all the way down into the middle of San Marino* (in fact, it would be beyond San Marino High School—if you've ever visited my house, you will



know how far that is).

In other words, if we were doing this to scale, we should have a tiny bit of mass at the atom's center, an even tinier bit of mass orbiting that center, and around 1.3 miles of NOTHING in between the two.

In still other words, for fear of beating a dead horse, of the approximately 1,350,000,000,000 cubic-feet (that's 1.3 trillion) within the sphere upon which the electron would ride in my kitchen-table mock-up, less than *one one-hundredth* of a cubic foot (approximately .008 cu. ft.) would be taken up with what you and I call "mass." [1]

Bottom line: As every physical structure in the world is made up of atoms, and as there is practically no physical substance inside the atom, essentially everything that supports you and me in a physical sense in the physical world is *other than it appears*.[2]

So look at your hand (go ahead, stop reading and look at your hand). You don't view your hand and think, "Ah, space!" Yet that's what your hand really is. In fact, if you were to remove all the space in your entire body, you'd need a microscope to see the 100-to-200-pound speck (depending upon your weight) that would be left. [3]

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[1] And giving one more way to marvel at this, if you could remove all the space involved in all the atoms making up the earth, you would be left with a ball whose radius would be, to a good approximation, around 390 feet. That's 1.3 football-fields worth. Get the picture?

[2] *I'm not making this stuff up!* Quoted in a *Time* magazine article, Fabiola Gianotti, one of the team leaders who found the Higgs boson using the Large Hadron Collider at Cern in 2012, said "We are nothing but quarks and electrons AND A LOT OF EMPTY SPACE." (By the way, she didn't say "protons, neutrons and electrons" because protons and neutrons are made up of smaller particles still, called *quarks*, but you get the idea.)

[3] If you had been one of my students, and if you had taken my semester-long *Cosmology, Astronomy and Relativity* class, you'd be aware of a very impressive situation in nature where this fact is starkly unmasked. When a star whose core is between 1.4 and 1.8 solar masses in size supernovas (dies by blowing up), the outer shell of the star is blown outward while the inner core is blown inward. The implosion continues until the electrically negative electrons in the atomic structure of the material making up the core are literally forced into their respective nuclei whereupon they combine with the electrically positive protons to make electrically neutral neutrons (I've simplified here, but that's the gist). Only when all of the space in the structure is removed with neutrons jammed up against neutrons does the implosion end. So let's say you have a star whose core is in this range. When that star supernovas and the resulting core implodes, the implosion doesn't stop until the sphere's radius is around fifteen kilometers across (this is around 10 miles). The end-result of this process—what's left after the implosion—is called a *neutron star*. Aside from the fact that you have gone from VERY BIG (like, the size of the sun) to very small (like 10 miles across) in a matter of seconds, what's additionally impressive is that with all of the space removed from the atomic material making it up the core, the neutron star's density will be found to be approximately the density you'd have if you compressed 1000 Nimitz-class

When appearances are deceptive, when something is wrongly perceived by the senses, we have a word for that. We call it *an illusion*. And that is what your world is. *Every physical object you will ever come into contact with* is a flat out, full-blown, first-class ILLUSION.[4]

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[You are not your body . . .]

As awe-inspiring as all of this is, at least for me, I've pointed this wonder out to get you in the mood to look at several other examples in which your world is an illusion, ones that are *not* so obvious or easily demonstrated.

Topping the list is your body. Each of us sports a body. We identify with that body. Most of us have a steadfast belief that our body and ourselves are one. *This is illusion*. You are not your body.

So what *are* you? You are an *Awareness*. Quite literally, *our ability to be aware* is what we are. What's more, Awareness is not natural to physical form, which is to say, existence in a body is *not* our natural state.

When we STARTED OUT in this spiritual evolution, we resided as Consciousnesses in what the east calls *the inner worlds*. Coming into matter, animating a "substantive, physical form," was as spooky for us *then* as losing our physical form (i.e., dying) is for us now.

I'll talk about *the why* of all of this shortly, but for now, let's come at this from a little different angle. Sit down quietly with the lights off. Close your eyes. Temporarily disconnect yourself from the outside world by drawing your threads of attention from *out there* to *in here* (this may take some time and a little bit of doing, but try it). As you do, refocus your

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aircraft carriers *into the volume of a marble*.

[4] An observation: If you or I lived two hundred years ago and someone maintained at the time that the physical world was an illusion on the level we are talking here, we'd have probably thought the individual was insane. Sure, if we were well read we might have known that there were Sanskrit treatises that were thousands of years old that talk about the illusory nature of "all things," but in all probability we'd have agreed with those who surmise that this referred to the psychological and emotional world of humans, not the actual, raw, physical world (and it does refer to these, too—this quote *is* multi-leveled). In thinking about the ancients, though, especially when considering the Brothers, it seems a little hard to imagine that one of their order, a Bodhisattva or, to extreme, a world teacher like a Christ or a Buddha, having seen to the heart of life, would not having at least peripherally noticed that the basis of the physical world was, indeed, other than appearances suggest. I'm thinking those ancient traditions hid esoteric truths in plain sight.

attention on a point just behind your eyelids.

As you look at that point, notice from whence you watch. The watcher is you. You are the point of awareness that is there within. You identify with your body because that is what you need to do if you are going to learn to deal with *existence in matter* (this foreshadowing *the why*—as I said, that is coming). But the body is only a vehicle; it is not what you really are. Furthermore, when you "die" and the body ceases to function, what you really are—that consciousness or awareness or whatever you want to call it—it doesn't cease to exist. It/you will move into the inner worlds.[5]

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5 Two minor points that are not so minor: 1.) This is NOT a good reason to kill yourself if you are unhappy with the way life is treating you. I'll talk more about this later. And 2.) Assuming this is true, its consequences are staggering. Consider: Our system of justice, at least in some states, condones execution as a punishment for truly heinous crimes. I don't know if the societal rationale for this is revenge or if it is just society trying to rid itself of bad actors, but the putting to death of, say, a mass rapist or murder is certainly within the moral lexicon of many. So let's say we have a very angry, abused, seriously self-involved human being who does something vile, and instead of putting the individual into prison for the rest of their life where there is some possibility that they may grow and evolve and at least become a little less out-of-control, we concrete into place the individual's mindset by sending the individual out of their body via execution. Have we solved anything? *Absolutely not!* Have we gotten rid of the problem? *Absolutely not.* All we have done is transfer the individual into the inner worlds. Once there they will most probably become earthbound (i.e., trapped in the lower astral) whereupon they might just be able to overshadow a being-in-body who is similarly messed up. Problem solves? Nope! Potentially, we've just magnified it.

On a little different note, long before computers had become what they are today (i.e., back when my first computer had 512,000 bits of read-only-memory, or RAM—today's computers have upwards of 512,000,000,000 bits of RAM), the Brothers warned us that there would come a time when computers would become, on a very superficial level, like the brain, and when that happened it would be possible for an earthbound in the inner worlds to overshadow it. I'm writing this in December of 2023. Just within the last year research in AI (artificial intelligence) has, shall we say, "blossomed." Its developers utilize what are called *neural nets* to mimic (again, superficially) the way the brain works. Drawing on the vastness of the Internet (or very large subsets of the Internet), these programs can execute what on the surface appears to be "learning." The most public form of this has come out as chatGPT, a neural-net-based program that uses *transformer architecture* to generate what appears to be very human-like responses to prompts.

The consequence of this in education is hugely problematic. You need an essay on, say 17th century art? ChatGPT will give it to you. You need it written at the level of an 11th grader (versus being written by a PhD candidate)? Include that in your prompt and it can do that for you, also. Want a picture of Craig Fletcher astride a donkey? *DAL. E3* is an AI program that can generate that for you (there has been a huge kerfuffle about this kind of thing because the artwork that exists on the Web that has been used by these neural networks to "learn" is accessed for free, which means a realistic, Picasso-like painting can be produced without Picasso, if he were alive, or his heirs getting a penny from the effort). Richard, the

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[The world of thought . . .]

The third of the great illusions is that *thoughts* are ephemeral things that just happen, and that they have no integrity unto themselves. This is not true. Thoughts are *entities unto themselves*. They have *form* (referred to as *thought-forms*), *structure* and *ENERGY*. They are real things. They can, when directed by a trained mind, affect matter, and you and I cavort with these animate things continuously (kindling? . . . don't do it!).

The Brothers didn't spend a lot of time talking about the underlying mechanisms upon which the physical world works. They were more interested in our focusing on the kind of individual we are. They wanted us to become more aware of how our actions affected others. They wanted us to be more aware of our motives. They wanted us to generally wake up, and I did my best to accommodate.[6]

Still, the reason I like physics is because I enjoy cogitating about how things work, so although it was not one of the primary concerns of the Brothers, my ears would perk up when they'd talk about the inner mechanics of this place and the inner mechanisms of existence as a human being. To that end (and again, remembering that I'm talking about this because

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other AP Physics teacher at Poly, created an extra credit problem for the AP Physics class. Just to see what would happen, he put the problem into chatGPT. It solved the problem. That means a student who is given the problem but doesn't know enough to solve it (or just doesn't want to take the time to do the work) could simply use chatGPT to generate a solution thereby circumventing completely the educational purpose of the exercise.

These *neural nets* are being used in business to make decisions, are being used in entertainment (a goodly part of the writer's strike in 2023 was focused on the demand that AI not be used to generate scripts), are being used by the military (the Israeli army used AI to select targets in their offensive in Gaza in 2023). AI is becoming an enormous part of everyday life, so much so that there is considerable worried within the coding community that AI will become too "smart," possibly one day turning on humanity.

So here's a fun thought. On top of all of the things I've said above, consider what an angry overshadower from the inner worlds might do in this environment. Even better, you know some bright young entrepreneur is going to use the fabrication technologies that exist today, or that will exist soon, to build a robotic body that looks human and that is powered by an AI program like chatGPT. What do you think an overshadower might do with something like that?

As I've found throughout my life, the Brothers were right on target with their warning forty-five years ago.

6 Put a little differently, they nudged me toward *wokeness*, minus the deleterious side effects of that movement, long before it came to the surface of popular thinking.

I find it interesting, not because it was a focal point of the Brothers' work with us), consider how I broached the idea of *thought* in the E.Phil class:

> Have you ever had a dream that was so real that while you were in it, you identified with it to the point that it was your reality? (Think about this for a second, and don't jump to conclusions . . . step through this with me as I go.)
>
> If you have ever done that, you will know that while you were in that dream you had a body that seemed perfectly solid and normal to you. The ground you stood upon seemed hard. The water you swam in seemed wet. The things you touched seemed to have heft. The people you interacted with seemed just like regular people all the way to the point of having a mind of their own. You maybe smelled smells and/or saw colors, all of which seemed perfectly normal. Everything you came into contact with seemed reasonable, yet none of it was based in the physical world. It was all conjured in your head, a product of pure thought.
>
> In fact, you don't even have to be asleep to experience this. Ever fallen into a daydream while on the job? Same thing. Or ever gone into deep meditation? This is a little different, but there are parallels.
>
> In all of these cases, you have *enfolded yourself into a world of thought* so completely that it is totally real to you while you are there. What you do, how you feel, it all seemed natural, every day, ordinary, even though nothing you are experiencing is based in real, physical matter. It is all based in *pure thought*.[7] (I know I'm repeating myself but this is important.)

(Please note that this was not me suggesting that the physical world is a dream. What I was trying to highlight is how powerful the world of thought is.)

_____x_____

[7] I can imagine someone thinking "poppycock, you need a brain, which is physical, to experience these effects." According to the Brothers, that is not the case. I will talk more about the brain and the inner worlds shortly.

[Why?]

In the Eastern Philosophy book, I talk about why we exist and why God created the universe (at least from a Vedic perspective). What I say follows:

> In the Vedic tradition of India, they have an interesting view of God, the Divine Mind, the One Self.[8] They say, *Within the Divine Mind's infinite perfection, It must have within Itself the possibility of growing and becoming more perfect.*[9] *If that were not the case, It would be static—and static states stagnate*.
>
> From this perspective, the One Self (God) is believed to have created the universe *out of the stuff of Itself* (i.e., out of Its own Thought), then sent highly developed *fingers of Its own Consciousness* down into that physical universe.[10] Why? Because by seeping into the myriad nooks and crannies of experience-in-matter, It created the possibility of *growth within Itself*.
>
> Life on earth is one of those crannies, and humankind—you and I—are believed to be tiny specks of that Awareness, baby Consciousnesses, that are evolving as the Divine Whole evolves. Human life may be unique in

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[8] To cut down on the amount of preamble needed, I've playing a bit fast and loose with this quote.

[9] (As presented in the text): Stating that something already perfect can become *more perfect* is certainly paradoxical, but it's not at all surprising that the East would use such phraseology in talking about God. Why? Because answering an enormously complex and subtle question with a paradox is a favorite tack within Eastern metaphysics. The reason why will hopefully become evident later when we talk about meditation.

Note not in the E.Phil book: The idea of infinite perfection becoming "more" is not as odd as it sounds. Consider: Defined a Euclidean line. Extending to infinity to the left and right, it is a perfectly formed, infinite, one-dimensional creature. Pin the line at a point and spin the line about that point. It will define a plane, a perfectly formed, infinite, two-dimensional creature. Define a line on the plane and spin the plane about the line. It will define a volumetric space, a perfectly formed, infinite, three-dimensional creature. In all of these cases, something that is infinite and perfect begets something that is infinite and perfect and "more." It is a limited analogy, but it does suggest that infinite perfection can become "more."

[10] EDITOR'S NOTE: though vastly more immense and complex and nuanced, this kind-of-obviously smacks of you participating in your own dream.

its existence, but it is not alone or especially blessed. It is one of many cosmic experiments, a delicate contrivance the aim of which is to allow fledgling Consciousness to learn to deal skillfully with *existence in matter* through *immersion in matter*. And as Consciousness grows from its experience, so grows the Mind of God.

As far as the Vedic tradition is concerned, that is why we exist and from whence we came.

God *thinking the world(s) into existence* . . . Might the ability of humans to think creatively—to literally think worlds into existence within the confines of their own mind—be what the Bible was talking about when it said, "God made man in His own image (Genesis 1:27)?"

Given all I've seen, though I'm quite sure I'm in the minority, I think it is . . . and we're back to, "If it doesn't make sense or you don't agree with it, don't stew over it. Keep reading. There's better stuff coming."

_____x_____

[God all powerful . . .]

I wasn't very thoughtful as a little kid, but one of the things that never seemed right was the idea that God was all powerful and all loving yet still didn't make things all good for His creations. A corollary of that was, "If Christ was truly *the only son of God*, why didn't He end suffering as we know it?"

There has been a lot of scholarly church thought directed at these questions over the years, but I never heard anything that was particularly satisfying. It always seemed as though the church was reaching.

One of the things I found interesting about the ideas the Brothers presented was that there was no need for the *God moves in mysterious ways* stuff. Everything was a straightforward, natural consequence of *our reason for being*, and it seemed easy to comprehend (this will become more evident with time). That, I think, is why so many people find the Eastern philosophies attractive.

And for the record, there was a very good reason why Christ didn't heal everyone on the planet. If what the Brothers have said is true, and I have no reason to believe it isn't, a world Teacher like Christ (the Sanskrit word for "world teacher" is *Avatar*—a word that has unfortunately been bastardized by the *gaming industry*) is a completely karma-less human

Being, a Master, the most advanced of the Brothers, who has been overshadowed by Consciousness so immense that the only word you or I could possibly use to describe It would be *God*.[11]

A Master existing at this level is someone who is completely, intimately, utterly connected to every single human Being in this system, not to mention the myriad of consciousnesses that are animating non-human form. When Avatars come, their task is to pick humanity up by the scruff of the neck and set it back on track in a spiritual sense.

That, in His own way, is what the Buddha did.

That, in His own way, is what Christ did.

That is what all the Avatars have done since the beginning.

YOU AND I DON'T HAVE THE INSIGHT OF A CHRIST, so when we run into someone in pain, we do the best we can to relieve it. Sometimes we can, which means it was no longer karmically necessary for the pain to exist. Sometimes we can't, which means it wasn't karmically right for removal because there was still something there to be gained. But in all cases, we do the best we can with what we know.

An Avatar, on the other hand, is not restricted by the veils of separateness that are, by necessity, a part of the human condition. They see directly into the heart of human necessity. They also know that one of the most powerful tools life has to shake awake Beings from the cocoon of spiritual slumber that self-preferment fosters is through *pain*.

Under normal circumstances, if people were perfect in their interaction with life, there would be no need for pain.[12] But that is not the case with most people. Pain exists to notify the recipient that there is *something to look at here*. Living an idyllic, pain free life would be wonderful, but a typical child-self in that state would simply sit like a great lump and never move beyond its small world.

That doesn't mean there are not other ways to prod the self into evolving in a spiritual sense. It is just one of many useful tools karma has at its disposal. It is especially useful, though, if the self in question is particularly hard to nudge.[13]

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[11] How powerful is one of these Beings? They say that when an Avatar comes, *He carries in one hand the power to change all things, and in the other hand the power to make the worlds a mist . . . literally.* Sounds pretty God-like to me.

[12] Christ on the cross was *not* a normal circumstance.

[13] Remember, life's duty is to draw Beings toward understanding how to successfully and skillfully deal with *existence in matter* as a spiritually sane Being.

As irritating as this is to the personal self, and as unlikely as I would be to tell this to someone who was actually in excruciating pain, pain has within itself the seeds of enlightenment. The real Teachers know this. A Teacher at the level of a Christ would never remove from humankind the possibility of enlightenment through experience, whether it be painful or not. It just isn't something a Being at that level would do.

What's more, when you or I do something, karma responds. But those karmic reactions are, in and of themselves, not usually monumental in their extent. When a *world Teacher* acts, by the very nature of the Being, the karmic repercussions are tsunamic.[14]

It is the same with the Brothers. These are Beings for whom the veils of separateness have vanished. Why? Because there is no longer any need for them to deal with separateness. As a consequence, they have sight to see how an individual's karmic lines are converging. If karma is moving a Being toward personal violence, as was the case with Sadat, being able to see that doesn't mean the Brothers have the right to jump in and stop the action. It just isn't something they can (or would) do.

New thought: H.P. Blavasky was the chela whose task it was to bring a reasonable view of reincarnation and karma to the western world. She did more. Along with knowledge of the Brothers, one of the other things that Blavasky brought to the attention of the Western world was the existence of what the Brothers called the *Dark Brotherhood*.

That is an idea we need to talk about next.[15]

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[14] This is part of what makes the gift that Avatars give to humanity so amazing. You have a Being who is absolutely pure, absolutely karma-less (a pure cup), and that Being through His (or Her) actions links Himself karmically to every human Being who EVER acts upon the energies set forth by that Teacher (pretty tsunamic if you think about it). In other words, they go from a karma-less state to a situation in which they are suffused in karma. They literally "take on the sins of the world."

[15] Minor note: It's 2020, maybe 20 years after I wrote this chapter, and I just had the most disheartening experience. I was watching a Netflix show called "The Kominsky Method" in which Michael Douglas plays an aging actor/acting-coach and Alan Arkin plays a crusty, near-retirement owner of a very successful talent agency. The series is absolutely superb; the acting is amazing. Unfortunately, in one episode, the grandson of the character Arkin plays arrived on the scene and proceeds to try to talk Arkin into becoming a Scientologist. Listening to the spiel, my heart sank. The patter sounded just like what I've been saying in this chapter. *You are not your body, you are a Being* . . . etc.

In the off-chance you don't know, the Church of Scientology is a very dark organization (Kay and Cathy had friends who had to go into hiding when they decided to leave "the church"). The TV show almost made the movement seem sane. ARGH!!!

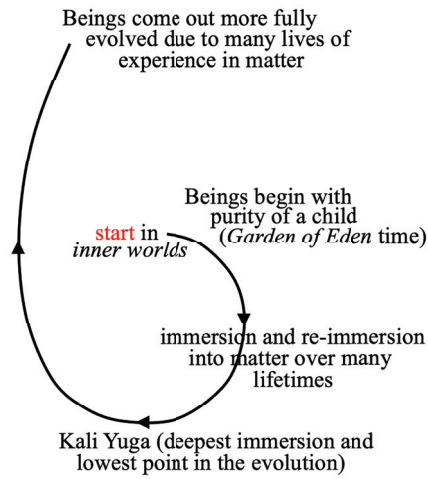
Chapter 9

And the Background Keeps Coming

[This chapter is a continuation of the last.]

I talk about the Dark Brothers and the circumstances that might bring them about in the E.Phil. book. As that presentation is fairly complete, I'm reproducing it below in somewhat altered form.

From the Eastern perspective we are examining, spiritual evolution is pictured as a spiraling process. Awarenesses-Consciousnesses-Beings start in a pure state in the Inner Worlds (Garden of Eden time), descend into the *experience of matter* by animating physical forms over many lifetimes, then spiral up, out and beyond in a spiritual sense (the sketch starts in the middle).


Beings come out more fully evolved due to many lives of experience in matter
Beings begin with purity of a child (*Garden of Eden* time)
start in *inner worlds*
immersion and re-immersion into matter over many lifetimes
Kali Yuga (deepest immersion and lowest point in the evolution)

In this way, Consciousness is given the opportunity to grow and become more through a series of incarnations, even though there may be times within the evolution when it appears as though Consciousness is failing and humans are going backwards.

Right now, if this view is correct, humanity is at the lowest point in this evolution. The East calls this *the Kali Yuga*—the age of iron. This is the time when humanity

experiences its deepest immersion in matter; when the energies and pressures of life are the heaviest; when a fair percentage of the Beings in bodies are individuals who have made particularly bad choices over many lifetimes, and who are now being given one last chance to move in ways that are better.

If an individual has accreted around itself through many lifetimes of poor choice so much negativity that it will not be able to transit into the spiritually subtle experiences awaiting those who will move on the upward side of the spiral, that Being will not be allowed to continue in the present cycle of development. Going into a sleep state, it will be stripped of the experiences it has accumulated around itself, and it will be made to remain actionless until another evolution similar to this one begins anew. This is not a punishment, although it is a failure and it is painful in the sense that there is great loss of time and effort involved. The Being is not damned, though. It is simply not able to proceed and must lag behind for a time—a very long time—until the universe can provide it with another appropriate opportunity to move forward.

A self that has been able to curb its child to at least some degree will be allowed to continue as the evolutionary path swings upward. It and its developed child-self will finish this evolution coming out much more experienced and capable in the ways of *existence in matter* than was the case in the beginning.

What is important here is that although there may be Beings in incarnation who are clearly moving upon "the right-hand path" (i.e., along the upward way), there are many souls who are on the edge. The *Kali Yuga* is the period of time when karma and the *High Mind within* presents these child-selves with their last chances to change in this cycle.

[Author's Note not in E.Phil book: On May 25, 2020, an unarmed black man named George Floyd was killed by Minneapolis police. It is now June 10, 2020, and for the last two-weeks, hundreds-of-thousands if not millions of people all around the world have been protesting the

killing. There have been some fires set and some break-ins, but the protests have largely been peaceful. John Oliver did a "Last Week Tonight" segment on June 7th that talked about the history of policing in America (police departments were initially set up to capture and return runaway slaves—one of the demands of the protesters is the defunding or, in some cases, the disbanding of police departments). He ended the segment by letting a black woman have her say.

Ask whether she thought the burning of a Target department store in her neighborhood made sense, she replied, "It isn't *our* store. We don't OWN *anything*." She said more, then ended with, "You're just lucky black people just want equality *and not revenge*."

That last sentence was one of the most powerful thoughts I've ever seen presented on TV.

Why? Because it said something rather profound about a fair number of the individuals in the black population.

Think about it, especially if you are white. Imagine having people in your family generations ago being kidnapped, transported across an ocean and forced into slavery with all that that suggests (inhuman, harsh working conditions; no rights; nothing to call your own; families regularly broken apart; women raped with no recourse but to submit).

Imagine having your people finally getting their freedom after a dreadful war only to have it taken away from them again by clever individuals from the enslaving class who generate laws that make it impossible for your kin to move up and out of "their place."

Imagine living in a country where the government wanted to encourage home ownership back in the 1920's, so they created loans in the form of mortgages available to the class that had enslaved your folk, but for your people they provided *contracts* that, after years of making payments, could be deemed "broken" if a single payment was missed or was even just late, whereupon their house could be taken away *with the loss of all of the equity they should have built up in the home* (the consequence of which was the systematic, premeditated draining of wealth from your community).[1]

Imagine finally getting some semblance of justice, only to find yourself living in a society in which every time you walked out your front door,

[1] According to the PBS NewsHour, the *average* accumulated wealth of white families in America is $130,000; for black families, the number is $9,000. So here's a thought: if you are wealthy and have good friends who are not wealthy and who are black, why not leave them a little something in your estate. If you have $20 million in bequests for your two kids, give the kids $9 million each. Then take the 2 million left over and give EIGHT black families $250,000 or SIXTEEN black families $125,000 each. *It's not rocket science!*

you had to wonder whether you might run afoul of a police officer who might become spooked for no particularly good reason, and who might shoot you dead as a consequence . . . only to be exonerated in a court of law due to what is called "implied immunity"—legal grounds that states that a police officer can use deadly force against anyone *for essentially no reason at all* as long as he or she feels threatened. And with all that having happened to you, *imagine not wanting revenge*.[2]

Christ in John 20:29 is purported to have said, ". . . blessed are those who have not seen me but who still believe." The church has made kind of a big deal about this—it's a part of their basis for faith.

I don't think their understanding of what was said (assuming it was said) is accurate. I think Christ was really saying (in expanded form), "Blessed are those who know nothing about this world, who don't understand that they are not their body, who don't know about rebirth or karma or any of the things that will be talked about in the Apocryphal Gospels, who know nothing about the Brotherhood of which I am a member, who are simply good folk doing the best they can in as selfless and kindly a way as they can—blessed are those souls who have not "seen" but who still move in goodness."

A black woman who can say "I don't want revenge, I want equality" is an inherently decent person. Imagine your standard, bigoted, white, redneck making a statement like that under the circumstances I've outlined above.

I haven't made a big enough deal of this in the E.Phil book, but there are many, many, many good people in incarnation on this planet right now. They are the ones who forego vengeance when, by all rights and means, they could claim it. They are the ones who, even in small ways, lend a helping hand to people who are not their own when the need arises. They are the people *you* would like to be around when life gets tough. They are the ones who will continue on into that upward spiral of evolution I was talking about earlier . . . and I just wanted to acknowledge that they exist here, now. Now continuing on with the quote from the E.Phil book.]

> There is another side to all this.
>
> It is believed in the East that when an individual has proceeded to a point of spiritual development where he or

[2] And yes, there are lots of reasons why they might not want revenge, but I'm going with the ones who don't because it just isn't the Christian thing to do . . .

she can benefit from contact with a more highly evolved Teacher, the individual will come into contact with one of the Masters. At that time, if it is karmically correct, the individual will have the opportunity to become a student of one these Teachers. In Sanskrit, an accepted student is called a *chela*.[3]

A chela is an individual who has attempted to completely step away from the world of the personal self and has instead focused himself or herself on service to the whole of life.[4] A chela has essentially announced to the Law (karma) that he or she wants to move more quickly in a spiritual sense. That is not a trivial matter. If the intention is accepted, within a very short time every imaginable sort of hidden psychological flaw and inconsistency within the self burbles up out of the subconscious and presents itself to the aspirant. Negativity, after all, cannot be stripped away if its presence is not evident to the individual.

Psychological pressures mount; situational pressures mount; failure to act in spiritually responsible ways is met with karmic repercussions that are far more severe than would be the case for a "normal" person.[5] In short, the

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[3] In the East, the tradition of a student going in search of his or her teacher, a guru, is closely related to the belief that Masters exist. Although the idea originated in the East, it is particularly prevalent today in the West. People are seeking. Many have concluded that there is more to life than meets the eye. They want answers, and that means looking for someone who has insight. What they don't realize is that when the time is right—when they have made their lives ready *through their actions*—the teacher will come.

Put another way, living the life of a chela means living the life of a chela . . . whether one is in direct contact with the Masters or not. There is no difference between the two situations. If you are going to live the life, live the life.

[4] The first vow of chelahood is said to be *to work for the whole of life without thought of recompense*.

[5] Footnote not in original text: The Brothers once talked about the adage, *break a mirror and you'll have seven years bad luck*. Atoms absorb experience (that is part of what the *akashic records* are about). When a chela messes up, the atomic structure of their body absorbs that experience. It takes seven years for the atoms of the body to be replaced with new atoms. So in an esoteric way, if a chela "breaks the mirror of the self," it will take seven years before they can extricate themselves from the tone of the action and be "cleansed" to move on. In fact, the Brothers added that if the mess-up is monumental, it might take seven *lifetimes* before the chela can continue. The number *seven* seems to be big when it comes to a readjustment of the self.

chela life is, from a personal perspective, harsh . . . remember the Greater Mysteries? The kind of people who were initiates were chela types.

Chelas do have control over and insights into themselves in ways that could be termed extra-ordinary. They are Beings who, ideally, are constantly making their efforts on behalf of the whole of life.[6] Having said that, they are not yet perfected Beings.

[New topic (this break is for clarity--it was not originally in the E.Phil book)]

If it is possible for a Being to make choices that will move it ahead of the spiritual stream of humanity, it must also be possible for a child-self to build, through certain disciplines, enormous mental abilities while making *conscious choices* that lead it along the "left hand path"—toward negativity and the *stunting* of spiritual growth. Because these individuals have focused their minds in ways that have allowed them to temporarily put karma off,[7] they exist to become darkness incarnate. They become Beings devoid of Light.

Their efforts are for the accumulation of power, for the satisfaction of the child's wants, for control of all around them. Being totally in-turned on their own self, they have become soulless in the sense that they have severed all connection with their parent self, the Higher Mind.

We are talking about Beings who are profoundly angry at life. Their intention is usually to bring as many other humans down with them as possible. What is worse,

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[6] Although I didn't attributed this tale to the Brothers in the E.Phil book, they did tell us a nice story from India about a beggar who sat against a wall on a small street in Benares. When people would pass by, whether they gave him a few rupees or not, they would find that within fifty yards or so of passing him they would feel better. They wouldn't know where it came from, but it would be a kind of lightening of their load. The beggar, according to the Brothers, was a chela. It was time within his spiritual development to learn to selflessly radiate lovingness, which is exactly what he was doing.

[7] This, as opposed to the Beings we learned about earlier who rather randomly chose poorly and will enter the sleep state until a new cycle can pick them up again.

they often have the power to do so in ways one might not expect. Specifically, they *could* be, though certainly are not always (as in, very, very rarely), failed chelas.

This startling prospect doesn't *seem* to make sense until you look at it more closely.

At the early stages of chelaship, powers begin to open even as psychological pressures begin to mount on the child-self and its ego structure. The inner struggles that occur between the higher side of the child-self and the living, negative habit patterns that the self has developed internally over many lifetimes can be fierce.[8]

With this effort, it is likely that there will be temporary failures. This is particularly dangerous for the aspirant early on. Essentially in a state of inner war, the lesser side of the *child-self* of a chela will not be completely aligned with the High Mind. In that state, it is possible that failure could so infuriate the *ego* side of the self that the *higher side* of the child might lose control to the *lesser side*. If that were to happen, the self could temporarily take up the path of negativity.[9]

[Note from outside the E.Phil. book: In fact, things are even more complex than I'm making them out to be as there is a natural, regular swing between control of the self by the high-side of the self and the low-side of the self. I may talk about this in later chapters, but if I don't the idea is highlighted

[8] These are usually motivational patterns that must be killed out and that, being animate, literally fight for their lives. You know exactly what this kind of in-fighting is like if you have ever observed yourself while trying to stop a nasty habit like smoking or a benign one like eating chocolate.

[9] It is not unusual for humans, you and me included, to become temporarily insane. I didn't put this in the E.Phil. book, but I saw this quite clearly in myself in early life when a very much desired love interest went south with my having no way to salvage the situation. The footnote that actually was placed here in the E.Phil book was: "Example: You have just walked up to a counter at a department store and the clerk, who is obviously agitated, is rude to you. Do you observe that the person has a problem and react to their incivility in a kindly way—in a way that will lighten their emotional load—or do you take offense and blast them? From a perspective of *spiritual sanity*, it makes no sense to provoke the clerk into more anger, more unbalance, more misery than he or she is already experiencing. Yet that is exactly what most of us do when confronted with an "unpleasant person." This is not an act of sanity, at least not in a spiritual sense."

in *The Aphorisms of Patanjali* by Christopher Isherwood (Patanjali is credited as the originator of *yoga*).]

> In most cases, the chela's attention-to-motive helps him or her get hold of the self and back on track, but anger is a powerful thoughtform and nothing is assured. If there are areas of motivation that haven't yet been cleansed, those chinks in the moral armor of the Being could lead to the holding of this anger and maybe even to a budding desire for the self to *get back* at life for the failure.[10]
>
> If the self is unable to pull out of the negativity, we could end up with a very angry, very powerful individual on our hands. And if that individual were to continue with its negativity, digging a karmic hole for itself that becomes deeper and deeper, it is possible the Being could get to a place where there appears to be no way back to the Light.[11]
>
> When that happens, when the Being sees no reward in even trying to change for the better, it becomes what the East calls a *Brother of the Shadow*—a *Dark Brother.*[12]

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[10] It is remarkable how strong the thought-form is to blame failure on anything but one's self. The last time you hit your thumb with a hammer, did you say, "Damn it!" ("it" meaning the hammer) or "Damn me!" (placing the blame squarely where it belongs)?

[11] Note not in the E.Phil book: Reiterating what I briefly said above, part of what makes chelahood so rarely achieved is that, having said to the universe and the karmic law, "I wish to move more quickly upon the path," the karmic repercussions of "messing up" are considerably more severe than would be the case for you or me as we move with the stream of humanity. Knowing the tests and pressures and pitfalls that come with taking this step, the Brothers are EXTREMELY CAREFUL when it comes to accepting chelas. It happens very, very, very rarely, but the prospect of catastrophic failure is at least partially why.

[12] Another note not in the E.Phil book: Something has been bothering me about the section you just read, and it finally dawned on me what it is. I wrote that section in the E.Phil book to highlight how deadly serious it is to become a chela. What I inadvertently did, though, was to give the impression that there are ex-chelas in the ranks of the Dark Brotherhood. For the reasons I highlighted in Footnote 11, this is possible but highly, highly, highly unlikely. The safeguards that Brothers have in place don't absolutely ensure success, but they go a very long way toward that end. I'm pretty sure, in other words, that your standard Dark Brother is not an ex-chela but rather an individual who chose to move in dark ways on their own from the get-go.

And having to do with those safeguards: I used to tell the following story to my E.Phil kids. There was a very fine man who lived in India several centuries ago who was known far and wide for being very benevolent and very active in doing good works. Because

Most world traditions have lore about these dark souls: There is a Tibetan Buddhist sect, the Red-hats, who worship death. Within that tradition are men called *dugpas* whose ritual practices are steeped in animistic earth magic. This pre-dates Buddhism. Some dugpas are said to be very dark in spirit and to have enormous power. Having trained themselves through meditation, they are believed to have the ability to affect and control the minds of the unwary.[13]

Dark Ones can also be found amongst the shamans of the American Indians;[14] the witch doctors of Africa; the magicians of middle east; the sorcerers of Europe. All over the world there are tales of Beings who have had powers and who were not benevolent in their use of them.

This Eastern view believes that such dark Beings do exist, in bodies, right now, on this planet. What is more, they are believed to be a natural consequence of the opportunities and pitfalls that face all Beings who attempt to progress through repeated incarnation. The only way a

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he wanted to move more quickly in a spiritual sense, he walked several hundred miles to the ashram of a spiritual Teacher (possibly one of the Brothers) in the hopes of becoming that Teacher's student. The man was cordially admitted into the presence of the Teacher who proceeded to tell the man he had heard all about him. He (the Teacher) then spent forty-minutes listing off all the good things the man had done. Feeling secure and safe, the man gathered up his courage and asked the Teacher if he (the man) could stay as the Teacher's chela. Having *sight*, the Teacher knew the man had a long karmic history of effort in a spiritual sense, but the Teacher needed to be sure. So upon hearing the request, the Teacher stood, faced the man and, without warning, hit him square in the face, knocking him to the floor. Watching throughout, if the Teacher had seen in the man's aura the colors of anger or the desire to strike back, he would have turned him away. But because he saw only deep lovingness, even in that extreme situation, the Teacher's reply was, "Accepted."

I used to tell my students this story to highlight exactly what I have been talking about, that chelas are not *normal* people, they are *extraordinary* people, and that the Teachers are strikingly careful (no pun intended) about who they let into the Brotherhood.]

13 Remember the little fakir who focused thought to make the English newspaperman believe he was seeing flames? That is child's play in comparison to what dugpas are purported to be able to do.

14 There were medicine men (shamans) within the American Indian tradition who were quite benevolent, but some were not. Consider the shamanistic practice of killing an animal to capture its life-energy. Attempting to force nature into giving up her secrets and energies is never the way of an enlightened Being. To an enlightened Being, nature gives its secrets *freely*. *Killing* to force nature into giving up energies is a doubly dark thing to do.

Being can grow into a working knowledge of free will and freedom of choice is if it has the possibility of choosing to be bad. It should not be surprising to find that some have taken that path.[15]

As things stand now, nothing would make the Dark

[15] Note not in E.Phil book: This is going to seem a little off-the-wall, and the first couple of paragraphs will be preamble to what is important with respect to the Brothers, but: There are two competing views in today's world about Capitalism. They can be summarized as: "Capitalism is the greatest wealth producing system for anyone who wants to work hard and drive themselves to success ever" (Fox News) and "Capitalism, at its core, is the absolute pursuit of profit at the expense of all human, environmental and social cost. To me, that is not a redeemable system for the prosperity and peace for the vast majority of people" (United States Representative (D) Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez).

The February 24, 2023 *On the Media* radio segment (NPR) featured Naomi Oreskes, professor of History and Science at Harvard University and co-author of *The Big Myth: How American Business Taught Us to Loathe Government and Love the Free Market*. She walked us through the history of Capitalism as it unfolded in the United States. What really caught my attention during the show was the summary Brooke Gladstone, moderator of the program, gave at the beginning. She said, "The idea of Capitalism is rooted in a *masterfully conducted* public relations campaign."

That observation brought to mind something the Brothers said during one of our small, inner-circle gatherings. I don't remember the date, but I distinctly remember the Teacher saying that as we sat in our meeting, there was another meeting in progress in which a number of the Dark Brothers were strategizing about how they would be approaching the coming years. He said of the individuals there that they were captains of industry and government officials, movers and shakers in our world, and that we would both recognize and be very surprised at some of the names involved.

And what do you suppose the Dark Ones were talking about? I suspect all sorts of things. For example, how little it would take to motivate people who are insecure or fearful or just want to believe they are *the chosen* into moving in truly selfish, despicable ways (think about all the horrible thing that have been done over the ages in the name of religion). And I wouldn't be surprised to find that they talked about Capitalism.

Capitalism is not inherently bad, but its fruits are predicated on the quality of the Beings who animate it. The Dark Side has always been able to "masterfully" appeal to the baser instincts of our population. As Oreskes pointed out, we have been psychologized into believe that any restrictions on the marketplace is a blow against freedom, so we in the United States (unlike our European counterparts) don't have "strong social safety nets, strong protections for the workers, strong protections for the environment in many cases and strong protections against dangerous products like endocrine-disruptive chemicals."

This is very dark stuff.

There really is a battle going on between Darkness and Light. And for all the advances it has brought our nation, Capitalism in the hands of self-involved individuals whose only motivation is the accumulation of wealth and power is fertile ground for the efforts of the Dark Side (and no, this is not a conspiracy theory, though generating and supporting conspiracy theories willy-nilly is a great way to anesthetize people to the possibility of real threats when they actually exist in the world).

Brothers happier than to have as many Beings as possible fail in their efforts during the Kali Yuga. Misery loves company, and if there is one state that is miserable it is that of the soulless.[16]

Since the accumulation of power for the sake of the self is the driving motivation behind the Dark Ones, it is believed that they are *constantly projecting thought-forms designed to affect the minds of the unsuspecting*. They do this through today's music;[17] through the reinforcement of

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16 The Dark Side doesn't have the option to *make* people bad, but it can open the way for people who are on the fence to *be* bad (thus acting like a kind-of karmic facilitator). As an example, when Congress created the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Environmental Protection Agency (the EPA), the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA); the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA), the Pollution Prevention Act, etc., they crafted bills designed to accommodate our ever-changing world. They did this by writing the bills vaguely with the understanding that each agency, populated by experts, would interpret the Acts in whatever way was appropriate, given the circumstance. Lawsuits always come into play when a policy that restricts, say, *the indiscriminate polluting of our waterways* is put on the books (the classic example of such pollution is the Cuyahoga River outside of Cleveland Ohio; it was so polluted that it caught on fire in 1969, that being the *twelfth time* it had happened since 1868). When such a lawsuit arises, a 1984 Supreme Court ruling called *the Chevron Deference* requires the judge to defer to the expertise of the professionals manning the agency (i.e., to the people who actually understand the situation being addressed). Since then, something like 18,000 court cases have been resolved using that requirement.

Using deconstructed history as a rationale, our current Supreme Court (it's June, 2024) has reversed the Chevron Deference ruling. That means there is a chance that a fair number of those 18,000 cases might be relitigated, creating regulatory havoc (ahh, can't you just smell the chaos). It also means a single judge who knows nothing about the intricacies of an issue (or who has an agenda) can make sweeping decisions that will affect the entire country (the mifepristone case is a good example—an ultraconservative judge siting safety concerns to overrule the FDA's approval of an abortion pill that has been used safely for 25-years). It may also halt the government's attempt to address global warming.

In other words, the Supreme Court is removing the brakes on possible bad actors, and that is going to have serious consequences for individuals edging toward the deep sleep. Interesting, eh?

17 Although music can be quite harmonious, its effect on the emotional body makes it a primary pathway into the auric complex. Many of the sound patterns found in modern music are believed to be degenerating to the aura and generally debilitating both psychologically and on more subtle levels. Music that is tinged dark is believed to have the power to magnify depression, over-stimulate the body's sexual drive (not to mention other appetites), and reinforce thought-forms of violence, anger, hatred, sexual depravity, etc. In short, projecting dark thought through the minds of people involved in the making of modern music—especially those who are on drugs—is believed to be a powerful tool in the hands of the Dark Side.

the desire for revenge; through irrational anger; through drugs, to name a few.

The more chaos, the better. The more anger and frustration, the better. The more they can pull you and me off the path, the better. Their champions are the Adolf Hitlers, the Pol Pots, the Stalins, not to mention the multitude of lesser folks (you and me) who, to one degree or another, mindlessly fortify their dark meditations with unpleasantness where there need be none, with selfishness, with the exercise of petty angers, etc.

Against this stands the *White Brotherhood*. These *guardians of humanity* are constantly projecting the thought-forms of compassion, reconciliation, kindness—of *reason* beyond that of the small self. The tone of their quality is found in the actions of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, the Dalai Lama, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and in the myriad small acts of benevolence that lesser folks (you and me) selflessly animate daily—being kind when you don't have to be; being helpful when others are in need; choosing to be understanding when someone hasn't been particularly nice to you (versus reflecting their discourtesy and anger back at them).

And which is more powerful, the White or Dark Brotherhood? Ultimately, Light will reign. Evolution never ceases, even when it appears stalled. But duality has its usefulness—it is the generator of choice. At this time, the powers of Light and Darkness are almost exactly even; the duality is almost perfectly balanced. Why? Because this is the Kali Yuga. There is need for a clear delineation between good and evil. It is a time of choice.[18]

[18] In the long run, the Dark ones will lose, *must* lose under the karmic law. Whether they like it or not, they are bound by karma. In fact, in a way they are servants of the karmic law—agents who give the opportunity of choice to others. They know this down deep; it is part of what makes them so angry. And this was not in the E.Phil. book, but the Brothers told us that this is a time when karma will make the paths to *selfish action* and *selfless action* glaringly obvious, just so each will be very clear for those who needed to make choices. Right now it's 2017, the age of Paul Ryan and Trump and a Republican health care bill initiative that would take health care away from 23,000,000 Americans. Judging others is not generally a very bright move, but in this case it seems pretty easy to see who is moving along which path.

> So what does this all come down to? As far as this view is concerned, there is quite literally a battle going on right now between the powers of Light and the powers of Darkness . . . and the stakes, quite literally, are the souls of humanity.

Given what I've said above, you can see that the Brothers are in an interesting situation. Because this is the Kali Yuga, the energies available to *the light* are exactly matched by the energies available to *the darkness*. So for every act of the Brothers, the Dark Ones are given an equal amount of energy with which to do what *they* will do.[19]

That is why the Brothers are so careful when it comes to proofs. When someone like Kay comes into contact with them and wants a proof, it can be given only if that individual has put into the pot, so to speak, considerable effort and goodness on behalf of humanity over his or her many incarnations.

There are not a lot of people who fall into that category at that level.[20]

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[19] I previously mentioned that the Brothers were under certain constraints. This is what I was talking about. Interestingly, though, that this problem goes both ways. Between 2016 and 2020, as the Dark Side poured tons of energy into that train wreck of a human being named President Donald Trump (you know, the instigator of the separation of children from their mothers at the Mexican border), good-hearted people all across the country were energized and galvanized in ways that otherwise wouldn't have been the case, to stand against the cruelty and spiritual insanity of the actions he and his people were regularly animating (and yes, I'm aware the spin they tried to put on their actions, but really?) This kind of energy balancing happens naturally at superficial levels because that is the way nature works. But beyond the superficial (like when we are talking about the Brothers), if you have a realized Being pushing energy around, the effects and rebound consequences can be through the roof . . . hence the need for the Brothers to be very thoughtful about what they do.

[20] I remember a man who came to one of Kay's meetings who spoke German to her. His attitude was that if he was really talking to one of the Brothers, surely the Master would be able to translate the language and answer the question back in German even though Kay knew no German. He was asking for a proof. The Brothers weren't willing to give it to him. He went away thinking that Kay was a fraud because she wouldn't answer him in German.

What's interesting is that I'm fairly sure that the way the Brothers worked with Kay in an energy-conserving way was to utilize primarily what was personally in her mind at a given point in time. They certainly could have imported information into her mental complex, and I think they sometimes did, but they didn't want to use energy to do so unless it was absolutely necessary. Under the karmic constraints of the time, expending energy in that way would have simply given the *Dark Side* more energy to work with in its own way. That was why Kay was told early on to study, study, study. The more information she put into her brain, the more latitude the Brothers had to deal with others through her.

So why didn't the Brothers save Sadat. The easy answer is that it wasn't karmically right for them to do so. The harder answer is *that is not what a "guardian of humanity" does.*

New topic: When I first started thinking about how I was going to talk about what the Brothers "do," I wrote the following:

> Modern-day computers are designed for easy use. You want to write a personal letter, there are "word processing" programs that will allow you to do that. You want to make a drawing, there are "graphics" programs that will allow you to do that. You want to bank on-line, there are "business" programs that will allow you to do that. Just click on an icon and you have your palette.
>
> What few people think about as they use their computer in these ways is that there is "stuff" going on underneath the surface that they will never see and never have to deal with. That stuff, at a fundamental level, controls what the desktop looks like or, for that matter, that there even IS a desktop.
>
> People who work with computers at this fundamental level see the computer in a different light. It's all logic; it's all mathematics; it's all coding; it's all "machine language." In short, *their* dealings with the computer are not *your* dealings with the computer.
>
> The Brothers work beneath the surface of life. If you understand eastern metaphysics, you'll know what that means. If you don't, you won't. Going on the assumption that you don't, I should probably say a few words (not that I'm such a *big whoop* for knowing).
>
> The thing that makes humans different from other animal forms is their ability to think creatively. This is one of those things about us that is amazing. It is also one of those things that is so *every day* that few people actually *find* it amazing. In any case, every human on the planet thinks at some level, even the comatose.

Modern science has relegated thought to neurological action in the brain. As far as science is concerned, thought has no life inherent to it. Kill the brain and the person's thoughts disappear.

According to the Brothers, that is not true.

According to the Brothers, *thought* underlies and permeates the physical world. What's more, *thought* is not just *out there* somewhere, it is inside us—it is a part of us.

The Brothers call this overlay *the inner worlds*, and it is just that—*worlds of thought* that are internal to us, around us, constantly flowing through us, connecting us to every other being and thing in existence.

In short, we exist in a *sea of thought*.

What this means is that by our very nature, we humans have access to the repository of thought-forms that came with this evolution along with all those that have been created as a consequence of human experience. The enormously powerful thought-form of unconditional love resides in the inner worlds and can be animated by you at a moment's notice as, for instance, you stare down at your newly born son or daughter. The enormously powerful thought-form of anger exists there and can be animated at a moment's notice when, for instance, our inadequacies come to stare us in the face. And as we animate these and other thought-forms, we put energy into their existence, sometimes becoming addicted to them, but *always* feeding them as we allow them to flow through us.

According to the Brothers, there are *great meditators* amongst their number, very powerful beings who, through their very existence, constantly support and feed the thought-forms of lovingness, kindness, compassion. Their work is to keep those thought-forms strong and vibrant and available for mankind. If they did not do this, those thought-forms would continue to exist but would be badly crowded by the thought-forms being animated by the Dark Side. Humans are

easily swamped. Just watch a mob sometime.[21]

It is important in a cosmic sense that the thought-forms of compassion and lovingness and kindness be constantly reinforced so that they will continue to exist powerfully in the human repertoire.

This, as unsexy as it probably sounds, is one of the Brothers' primary responsibilities. To keep these thought-forms supported. And as strange as this is going to sound, they and all on the path do this not only through intentional, mental focus but also, simply, by exercising the thought-forms in everyday life. Holy men are acknowledged as being holy because the tone that comes as a consequence of their thought is suffused with Light. They exercise compassion. They exercise love. They exercise selflessness. But what they are really doing, whether they be aware of it or not, is fortifying the thought-forms of Light. And in doing so, they make those thought-energies more available to you and me and the whole of life.

So in short, the guardians of humanity are not here to safeguard the bodily existence of people. Their tasks is to guard and support the immense, positive thought-forms that Beings in bodies here on Earth unconsciously depend upon as they (we Beings) attempt to learn to deal skillfully with *existence in matter*.[22]

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[21] Better yet, think about the people who regularly vote for Congressional candidates who will, in all probability, act in ways that are *against the interests of those voters* when they get into office (that being one of the more interesting hallmarks of the Republican Party today.)

[22] I just read this last section and want to be sure you understand how powerfully important this is, so let me come at it in a little different way. We are intimately, intimately connected to the inner world and the thought-forms that reside there to support us, but because we are not really practiced at the "pushing around" of dynamic thought, we are no more appreciative of these thought-forms and the inner worlds themselves than we are the presence of the air we breathe (which we are completely oblivious to until we somehow find ourselves without). Even if you don't appreciate it, believe me, this IS a big deal, a hugely big deal. Cut off your air supply for a few minutes and you will see what I mean (metaphorically speaking).

Chapter 10

A Very Spooky Dream, A Story and More Background

Knowing about the Dark Brothers did not so overshadowed my life that I was constantly looking over my shoulder, terrified something ghastly was going to come looming out at me. There were two reasons for this.

First, I was young and stupid and arrogant and had no idea what the Dark Side was all about. Having had little apparent direct experience with it, I had no idea how devastatingly powerful it and the Beings who animated it were.

Second, the Brothers' work was and is behind the scenes. As I said earlier, one of their main tasks is to fortify thoughtforms that are positive and constructive and that will be useful for humanity, keeping those forms supple and evident and available for human use. They are not interested in being in the public eye. That is not something that would be useful for them. The *Brothers of the Shadow* are similarly disposed in the sense that they do not want to be noticed, they want to control unaware, weak minds from behind the scenes.[1] That means you will in all probability never come into actual contact with one of the Brothers, but neither will you come into actual contact with one of the *Dark Ones*.

My situation was slightly different from yours, though, as I had a thin link to the Brotherhood. They told us early on that we were "protected," but I didn't really know what that meant.[2] Still, I was an insignificant small fry, so there was no reason for me to come into contact with any of the *Dark Ones* unless I did something really stupid . . .

[And now, IT'S STORY TIME!]

I've given all this background because I want people to know why I

[1] This footnote is being written in 2019: They must be having a field day with our President.

[2] I say a little more about being protected at the end of this chapter.

think the way I do and why I sometimes tell people that in all probability, my view of the world is very different from theirs. But on a secondary level, I've wanted you to have the background needed to understand some of the stories I'll be telling throughout this book. The one you are about to read is not as scary as my mom's *I'm one of the bad guys* tale, except if you think about it, its implications underneath the surface are pretty unsettling.

As I said before the Sadat story, it was fairly rare that the Brothers would tell us about "current events" and, specifically, things the *Dark Side* was up to before their acts became public record, but there was one other time I remember vividly when they let us *in* on something that was up.

It was, again, during one of the inner group's small meetings. Someone asked where the speaker was at the time. The Master said he was in the process of traveling with one other Master and several of their chelas to Egypt. Egypt is the repository of much hidden, ancient knowledge, and the *Dark Side* was evidently trying to create problems with one of the guarded places. The Teacher who was speaking was on his way to Egypt to help deal with the situation.

I, fool that I was, went home that night, sat down in meditation, went in my mind to the place where the Dark Ones were working in Egypt, and streamed as much loving thought as I could at them. When I was done, I went to sleep.

That night, I had a dream.[3]

In the dream, I was living on an ocean pier in a house of glass, and a huge storm had come up. Every door in the house was flung open. I tried to close and lock them, but I couldn't. Then, I saw a man standing on the pier outside the house. His back was to me. He could have come in if he had wanted because I couldn't close and lock the doors. He didn't though, so I went out to him. When he turned, I saw in his face the most powerfully haunting evil I had ever seen. It was terrifying and so vivid that it actually bolted me wide-awake.

The next day when I saw Kay, we sat down to talk. I didn't tell her about my little meditation, but I did say I'd had a very weird dream. Before I could go into details, though, one of the Brothers came through and without preamble said flat out that in projecting thought in the way I had during my little meditation the previous night, I had brought myself to the attention of some of the Dark Ones (that was the *face of evil* symbol in the dream). I was a bit dumbfounded because it was as though He jumped

[3] I, like my mom, often have dreams that have symbolic meaning for me.

right into the middle of a conversation *Kay and I hadn't yet had*. I hadn't had time to tell Kay *what* the dream was, and I hadn't said *anything* about the meditation.

He went on to point out that I didn't have the mental focus or training to keep from being swamped by the powerful minds I had prodded, and that because I didn't know what I was doing I really had no way of protecting myself (hence the dream symbol of a house—a place where you live—with all of its doors wide open with no way of closing and locking them).

The consequence of all of this was that one of the chelas who was engaged in dealing with the problem in Egypt had to mentally leave his task and actually stand in protection for me. In other words, by putting my nose where it didn't belong, I had evidently dissipated the Brothers' efforts because one of their number had to veer away from his assigned task to deal with my vulnerability.

After I apologized and He left, I filled Kay in on what had happened.

The adage *a little bit of knowledge can be a dangerous thing* came to mind after the fact. As good as my intentions had been, I was a damn fool for trying to do what I did. The Teacher wasn't mad at me, he just wanted to be sure I understood that I wasn't the *inner worlds powerhouse* I apparently thought I was, and that I shouldn't be messing with things I didn't understand. It was a humbling experience, but under the circumstances, I was grateful to have friends.

(And I reiterate, although I wouldn't suggest anyone meditate toward the *Dark Ones* in any case—not any more than I'd suggest they pray to what the Christians call Satan—a normal person under normal circumstances probably wouldn't have attracted the attention I did. My specialness came as a consequence of my knowing what was happening at the time, and in my slight connection to the Brothers.)[4]

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[4] This note is about Egypt. I should have put it where I said the Brothers were going to one of the protected places in Egypt to help out with an attempted incursion by the *Dark Side*. I didn't include it there because it would have interrupted the flow of the story, so here it is now:

I don't remember the year, but at some point during my time with Kay and Cathy and the Brothers, Kay and Cathy wrote a dialogue centered on *The Book of Coming Forth to Light*, better known as *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* (it was called *The Book of the Dead* because it was found by archeologists with Egyptian mummies). The ladies enlisted members of our group, myself included, to record this dialogue. Allan, our next-door neighbor, who was not very well educated and had a horrible time just reading, nevertheless had a wonderful speaking voice and played the departed soul who was being led by Anubis (played by myself) through the desert to the *Hall of Judgment* where Maat (played by Cathy) would weigh his heart against the *feather of truth* in the presence of Osiris.

We recorded our effort on a reel-to-reel tape recorder, which I ran. I had no editing equipment, so we'd do a run-through, then I'd play the tape back and if it was good, we'd go on. If it wasn't, I'd rewind the tape to the beginning of the run and we'd do it over again. This would continue until we got it right.

Hieroglyphics don't include vowels, so nobody knows what ancient Egyptian actually sounded like. Kay and Cathy included a couple of chants in the play, given to them by the Brothers, that were real. Along with the chants, the Brothers, through Kay, demonstrated how to say the words. In other words, what we were doing was authentic.

So we were recording one afternoon, and at the end of the little piece we had done, I proceed to do the playback, and right in the middle of the dialogue where there was supposed to be a short period of silence, we hear a very distinct, male voice say, "pu ent." My reaction was, "PU, ENT? Where the hell did THAT come from?" It was all very mysterious, not to mention just a little bit irritating because it meant the section was ruined and we had to do it over again.

That night we were sitting around the dining room table when one of the Brothers came to talk to us. During the conversation, someone asked what the deal was with the "pu ent?" The Master said that the Being who was acting as guardian to one of the protected places in Egypt (no, we're not talking tombs here) was a part of the Brotherhood, was very powerful, and was someone who had first accepted responsibility of the guardianship when he was a priest in one of the temples in very ancient time. When he stepped across the line (i.e., when he died), his body was mummified. I realize Hollywood has made all sorts of movies about mummies coming to life and walked the earth, dispensing mayhem as they execute the curse they are bound by. This is clearly fiction. What isn't widely know is that because mummification inhibits the natural process of decay, it forces an unnatural link between the Being who animated the body and the body itself. In other words. mummification is only really useful if a Being wants or needs to hold a link to the physical form he or she has animated during life. That *was* the case with this guardian, and being quite powerful in his mind meant he could act (with the link) quite forcefully in protecting where he was if need be (in fact, the Brothers said the Being was fully capable of sending an aggressive intruder "out of their body" if necessary.)

The old language, according to the Brothers, hadn't been spoken in thousands of years, so when that Being sensed its presence in our chanting, the Being wanted to say, "hello," so to speak. That was what the "pu ent" was. The Being was simply acknowledging us. (And not to make too fine a point of it, but this gives you a feel for the power of the Being, being able to sense the chanting, then being able to impress a message on a magnetic tape half-way around the world, *using nothing more than his mastery of thought*.)

As for the final tape, Kay and Cathy took it to a conference up in Big Bear hosted by Eleanor Wasson, a woman who was a mover-and-shaker in New Age circles in the 1970s and 80s, and when the tape was played it was completely filled with static. It wasn't that way when it left Pasadena, so it was, again, a bit of a mystery. Turned out that in fairly short order, a bunch of stuff happened within our group (I don't remember what, just a lot of commotion), and we never did ask the Brothers what happened (we were also, at that point, just plain exhausted with the project). In looking back, though, I suspect it wasn't appropriate for the old language to be resurrected in such a public way, so one of the Brothers (or a chela) just wiped the tape clean (or more accurately, rendered it un-listenable) before it could "get out there." One way or the other, the "pu ent" happened. It really did happen.

On a considerably less serious note, there was the time when the group got together at Cathy's brother's newly bought house to try to dislodge a very apparent, very unhappy discarnate. This was a ghostie you could *feel* when it was around. It was summer and warm, yet your hands would go like ice when the Being was present in the room (and no, the house's air conditioning was not *on* when this would happen).

We sat in a circle, went into meditation and tried to force the entity out. A few minutes into the effort, K.H. arrived through Kay.

The first thing Kay said was, "K.H. is here. He's laughing."

It was a good-hearted laugh, but we were not focused, we were ineffective and we frankly had no business doing what we were trying to do. He went on to tell us so in no uncertain terms, then swept the disincarnate out with a stroke. Again, humbling but educational.[5]

New topic: There is one more thing I'll share before moving on. The Brothers told us that once they approach someone as they had with the members of our group, they would never leave them in an inner sense. If separation occurred, it is always at the instigation of the lay-chela involved.[6]

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[5] There is one more warning I should give here: Knowing about all of this might affect the way *you* deal with life, but you need to be careful when you are dealing with other people, specifically when it comes to infirmities that modern medicine thinks it understands, but probably doesn't (at least not completely). For instance, if you run into someone who says they hear voices, they may well be having contact with discarnates on the astral level like my mom, but knowing that isn't really going to help because people like Kay, *backed by the power of the Brothers*, just aren't around (and if people claim to be, beware—you are probably dealing with a fraud). The kind of karma that might draw someone into that kind of experience expects people to deal with the situation with the tools widely available, which in this case is our medical system and probably includes the use of drugs. Keeping someone out of the system because you know better and because you think you can somehow shut the doors into the astral with your own mind is folly, and it may get you arrested (if not sued). Again, *a little bit of knowledge can be a dangerous thing*. You really have to be careful with what you do with what you know.

[6] *Lay chelaship* is a kind of probationary state in which an individual is given a little training and attention, then watched to see what he or she will do with it. Kay told me early on that when it came to the Brothers and lay-chelaship, many (relatively speaking) are given the opportunity but very few ever make it out the other end. "The Brothers are happy," she said, "if they get a fully accepted chela *once every hundred years*." This is not because the Brothers are elitists. It is because humans are incredibly complex, and because it is so rare to find someone who is at a point karmically where they can completely give up on personal goals and desires of the child-self in favor of acting "on behalf of the whole of life" . . . not to mention someone who doesn't have an epic array of under-the-surface karmic knots to attend to.

I didn't understand what that meant at the time. I do now. To explain it, we need (once again) more background . . . which is coming in a slightly roundabout way.

Around the time I was doing my really stupid stuff with respect to meditation, like trying to confront dark forces that were way beyond my means, Kay in a separate chat told me how the Brothers find people they are karmically permitted to try to approach as lay-chelas.

An individual who has, through many lifetimes, built into him or her self a deep inner selflessness, has a kind of light about them that is beyond the norm. This is auric and not obvious to the naked eye, but it is there (even if, at times, it coexists and is crowded by the smallness of the personal self's desires—sounds paradoxical, but the self is vast). According to Kay, when the Brothers look at humanity on a deep level within and through the inner worlds, it is a lot like looking into a dark valley in which there are tiny, individual lights. These lights are the Beings of humanity. When the Brothers find a light that is particularly bright, they look more closely. When it is karmically possible to do so, they will approach the individual.[7]

In other words, for someone to actually come into contact with the Brothers (even distantly as was the case with me through Kay), there has to have been some kind of fairly major effort on behalf of humanity over a long period of time—as in lifetimes—on the part of the individual. That is what makes contact possible.

When contact was made in my case, it happened naturally. Mom had her problem. Mom found Kay (or, probably more accurately, was karmically drawn to Kay). Kay helped Mom with her problem. Mom introduces me to Kay. Kay introduces me to the Brothers. It all happened very naturally *without my looking for or expecting anything*.

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[7] As I'm writing this, I have pictures of all sorts of charlatans approaching good people who want some kind of contact with the Brothers, claiming to be of the Brotherhood. All I can say to that is BEWARE. From what the Brothers said, and echoing the Theosophists, it is quite rare for the Brothers to extend themselves toward someone like that. If your intent is to follow a spiritual path, it is better to act in the best way you can without an aim of contact. If your motive is pure, it will protect you. As for me, I wasn't looking for "my teacher" and didn't know anything about any of this before I met Kay. Once I arrived, though, it was so evident that there was something different going on, what with the way the lesser side of my *child-self* would just calm down and go to sleep when the Brothers would talk. It was not an emotional thing like the high that I'm told born-again Christians feel when they first "meet Christ." It was different. I suspect you will understand what I mean when you get into the section of quotes in the next chapter.

As I got to know Kay better, and as I had more and more opportunities to talk to the Brothers through Kay, there was one Teacher to whom I found myself particularly attuned. That Teacher more or less took me under his wing, as was the tradition. When I needed help, He was the one who came through Kay.

When an individual comes into contact like that, it is not uncommon for the lesser side of the individual's *child-self within* to more or less go to sleep. That allows the Higher side of the child to take over. Translation: The individual temporarily sets aside its self-driven desires and is filled with an urge to move as fully as possible along a spiritual path.

As contact continues, the individual makes efforts. At some point in time, though, the outward contact with the Masters comes to an end and the individual is left to his or her own devices.[8] It isn't that the inner bond between the individual and the individual's Teacher has been broken—the bond has nothing to do with proximity. It is simply that there is no longer any outward interplay.

When this comes, the self moves in whatever way seems appropriate to it. If the Being has serious karmic knots to deal with, karma moves to bring the individual into the right kind of experience to allow that Being to work them out or, at least, to *try* to work them out. If the individual has seriously strong desire patterns that went dormant during the time with the Brothers, those re-animate and the Being has to work with them. And if the Being is able to deal with all of that, the subconscious opens up and the Being has to deal with everything he or she has *ever* done that is messed up. After all, if you want to move ahead of the stream of humanity in a spiritual sense . . . on behalf of humanity . . . you have to be willing to look at your own self minutely.

The self, in other words, is put through what seems to be a fairly punishing experience once it outwardly leaves its contact with the Brothers. How it reacts determines what happens next.

With most people, the old patterns reassert themselves and the individual moves back toward being the kind of Being he or she would have been if the Brothers hadn't come into the picture. In most cases, you end up with a person who is generally good and kind and, sometimes, knowledgeable about spiritual matters, but who is uneven in the sense that there are certain personal areas in which they really aren't very together. In short, they go back to being a relatively normal human being.[9]

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[8] In my case, this happened when Kay died.

[9] In truth, this is a "best case scenario." If the individual has had some siddhis—some of

Even full-blown chelas sometimes fall back into old patterns in this way. Charles Leadbeater, the chela who, in his early years, wrote the book *The Masters and the Path*, failed later in life to check his overwhelming attachment to the ceremonial side of religion. This kind of failure does not have to be terminal, but it is definitely a set-back.

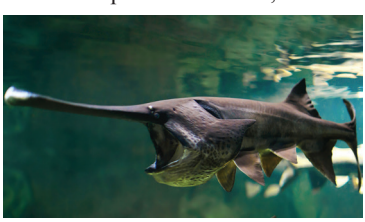
When this happens, it is not uncommon over time for the individual to pull his (or her) focus away from the Brothers and put it more on what is happening in his (or her) personal life. And when that refocusing is more or less complete, the Brothers have not left the individual, it is the individual who has left the Brothers (at least outwardly).

When Kay died, that is when I began to move back toward being more normal than not. More about that shortly.[10]

"the powers"—open up in them during the contact, it is possible that the individual will not come out of the experience in such good shape. In *The Mahatma Letters*, one of the Brothers lamented the fact that nearly every individual that had come close to them through Blavasky, but who had not made it, so to speak, had moved into some level of insanity as a consequence. This was not falling down, foaming at the mouth insanity, mind you. This was insanity in the sense that so much opened up to the self inwardly, when the impetus left and the self was left on its own it kind of lost its head. I, for one, have seen this clearly in myself . . . hence my buying a Porsche two years ago (this was written in 2003). That was one of the most spiritually stupid things I could have done (I'll talk more about that later), but I did it because, damn it, I wanted something I could race around in. Others have moved in considerably more destructive ways after moving away from the Brothers. It is a natural danger that trails along behind the opportunity.

[10] I have struggle with whether I should include this because I don't want to give people a reason to diminish the importance of the Brothers or the ideas presented in this book. I seem to have a strong urge to include it, though, so I'm going to do it. It has to do with training I was given in ancient times, and obliquely about "being protected." Here goes.

In preamble, you have read about my mom's experience with *the bad guys*, about Kay's life, about the life of Blavasky and about a few of the experiences I've personally had with the Brothers (Sadat; the story behind that spooky dream; speaking to an empty room; Rolf's observation about my soon-to-be life path as an educator; *pu ent*), so I'm trusting that by now you've accepted the Brothers and Kay as *the real deal*. That said, I'm about to tell a story the Brothers told me about myself that, if you are a critic or skeptic, is going to confirm in your mind that I'm either very naive or just a little bit nuts (not as nuts as that whackjob Margery Taylor Green, the Republican House member from Georgia who believes in Q'anon, space lasers and some of the wilder conspiracy theories circulating amongst the Republican faithful, but nuts nevertheless). I'll try to back into this story gently.



If, two thousand years from now in the year 4024, someone were to claim that there had existed "in ancient times" (i.e., now) a 23-foot-long, sword-snouted fish that swam with its mouth agape like a giant basket, and had existed as a specie for 200-million years before going extinct (the Chinese Paddle fish—it went extinct in 2019—the photo is

from Natalia Belay via Getty Images/Stockphoto), you might well believe the individual daft and, at best, view the story as “mythological.” I'm about to talk about another “mythological creature” that was, according to the Brothers, not mythological at all (though considerably different than common sense suggests).

One of the roadblocks you will face in accepting the story is the fact that you, if you are normal, assume that the understructure of life and nature in this day and age is the way it has always been. According to the Brothers, that is not the case. This is the Kali Yuga, the age of iron, the time when matter has concreted down about as far as it will ever go, and a time when the thought-forms coming out of the inner world are about as heavy as they will ever be. This condition hasn’t always been. The Brothers said in one of our inner-circle meetings that matter used to be considerably *less dense*. I wasn't sure if they were telling us that it was truly, physically less dense, or that some of the subtleties that reside in the inner worlds were more able to intermingle with the physical level than is the case now. One way or the other, though, in a fundamental way the world *now* is not at all like it used to be.

The other sticking point is that most people’s idea of nature is not really in line with what the Brothers have told us. Nature is constrained to support Awarenesses, you and me, in ways that are not always obvious. So when nature was practicing with the creation of forms that would, down the line, become the backbone of our current physical world, its experimentation spawned many forms that might today seem fantastic. Imagine a 2000 pounds, ten-foot-long, giant sloth. None other than Charles Darwin found evidence of just such a creature. (And even today, some of the funkier stuff is still with us. Imagine a psychodelically colored creature that has ears like a bunny and has a penis attached to its neck . . . a penis that, when damaged and detached, will grow back. Image these creatures being hermaphroditic so they can have sex with themselves or can have it head-to-toe with another of their kind. Imagine that they eat creatures that normally protect themselves by firing poisonous harpoons at interlopers, but our creatures have a digestive system that can take the harpoons in unexploded, store them in tendrils that appear to be fingers (but which are really an extension of their digestive track) and can fire those harpoons at will at their own attackers. And imagine that these creatures can be as small as the end of your pinky. I give you the *nudibranch*, or sea slug, which is spectacularly bizarre and still around—see the article on them in the April-May 2024 “Smithsonian” magazine . . . and I might add, when I read this section to Cathy, she said, "I wonder if the Artificer who created this thing lost his job because of what he'd been smoking." You gotta admit, this is some comically crazy shit.)

My point is that nature has experimented with form in a myriad of ways, and another of those fantastic forms, though more exotic than the sloth or even the nudibranch, was the Centaur.

Centaurs are mythological. This tells us two things. Either they were a figment of someone’s imagination, or they existed so far back in time that we have lost contact of the *reality* of their existence. (And by the way, we lose track of stuff all the time: Homer is believed to have lived somewhere around 900 BC with his poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, being transcribed from oral tradition around 700 BC—the city of Troy was center of the *Iliad*, but it was thought a fiction until Heinrich Schliemann found it (as a consequence of the having dreams about it) in 1870. Having been lost to history, this nearly three-thousand year old city was believed to be a FICTION until just a hundred and fifty years ago).

So back to Centaurs. For context, the almighty Google (a source I never thought I'd quote) says of them, "Centaurs were believed (by ancient Greeks) to live in the forests of

Thessaly (in Greece) *beyond the laws of man*." Continuing, it said, "They were half-man, half-horse Beings representing an intermediate stage between human civilization and nature (my note: not a surprising link, given nature's mandate). The ancients portrayed them as barbarians who were unable to control their primeval instincts."

What was *not* made clear in the Google entry was that according to legend, there were two "types" of Centaur. The main population was primitive (these would be the barbarians identified in the Google reference). A smaller contingent was noble and held wisdom (not in the Google reference). It was to members of that smaller, second group that wealthy Greek families would traditionally send their off-spring to be educated.

I'm bringing this up here because at one point early on (long before my time at Poly), the Brothers told each of the members of the group about a life each had had in very ancient times that was somewhat informative for this life, and mine had to do with living in ancient Greece and coming into contact with a Centaur (I mentioned earlier that there had been times when I'd had "a bit of training"—I suspect this was one of those times).

During my stay with this teacher, there was trouble with some of the primitive Centaurs. According to the Brothers (as I said earlier), matter was not as "dense" in early times. As a consequence, it was possible to have Beings like the Centaurs animate bodies that seemed solid but that were actually half in the physical world and half in the inner worlds (this, I presume, is why we have no fossils of them; it also animates what I was talking about when I said they were "considerably different than common sense suggests").

In the story, I was fairly young (the Brothers didn't give my age, but I had the sense I was around seven or eight). As a consequence of the uprising, I was given the task of guarding one of the roads that led to the school compound. So there I sat, watching, when several Centaurs appeared about a hundred yards down the road, coming at me at full pelt.

I had come from a family that had a deep dedication to the idea of doing one's duty, so although I was terrified, I stood my ground. As they came, I gathered up all the courage I could muster, raised my tiny little fist and, shaking that fist, shouted at the top of my lung, "YOU HAVE NO POWER HERE!" I shouted that over and over again as they got closer, and as I did they began to lose their coherence, shifting more and more back into the inner worlds. By the time they were within a stone's throw, they had completely vanished. And with that, I passed out.

I had done my duty in a terrifying situation, but what I didn't know was that the entire time, I was perfectly safe. Because located quietly behind me, completely unbeknownst to me, was my teacher, the Centaur I had been entrusted to, standing in protection of me.

According to the Brothers, I grew up to be a teacher in my own right, one with a certain amount of wisdom, who was beloved by his students and who did his duty to the end . . . just like this time around (though maybe the "beloved" part is a bit of an overstatement, and who can say about the wisdom).

The reason for the story? Threefold: First, we aren't talking Centaurs, but "standing quietly behind" each of the members of our group have been (I believe) chelas providing us with protection. They haven't interfered with our karma, but they have allowed us space to grow without the Dark Side interceding and crushed us. I am very grateful for that.

Second, as I was approaching the time when I would be "working with the young" (remember Rolfs words?), the Brothers wanted me to understand that there exists knowledge and history in this world that cannot be found in textbooks but are worthy of wonder.

Finally, this story may sound wild, but you have to remember it wasn't told for you. It was told for me, and it awoke in me things that needed to be awakened.

Chapter 11

The Brothers

Ever since I started doing the E.Phil class, one of the ideas that has fascinated my students has been the possibility that there might be highly evolved Beings in bodies, right now, on earth, who work behind the scenes on behalf of humanity (i.e., the Brothers). When I would talk to my kids about the Brothers, I would do so obliquely. Still, whenever the idea came up, everyone's ears would perk. It was always something they wanted to know more about. This chapter is devoted to presenting things the Brothers have said while talking through Kay to our group during our small-meeting gatherings (as transcribed by myself).

There are several disparate, preliminary notes, though, that I need to make first.

1.) When you finally begin to read the transcriptions, some of the wording is going to seem stilted. This is because some of the quotes are translations of private texts the Brothers have in their possession. These won't read conversationally because they weren't conversations. They were from larger, written commentaries.[1]

2.) This is not specific to the Brothers' meetings, but it was something I noticed in general during my time with Kay. Enlightenments are interior, spiritual awakenings. They often come at a gut level when seemingly unconnected ideas connect. As each individual has his or her own, personal, inner, mental landscape, the experiences that might trip me into a minor enlightenment will not necessarily do the same for you (and vice-versa). That is why using words in an attempt to animate a personal enlightenment for others is usually fruitless.

In short, there were a number of times when the Brothers said something in one of our meetings that sent me into a reverie that was indescribable, yet no one else in the group was so affected. The quotes I have pulled

[1] In my original manuscript, I didn't point this out. When my dad read it, his reaction to a lot of the quotes was, "Who talks like that?" The answer: "Nobody!"

for this chapter have been quotes that affected me personally. They may do nothing for you.

3.) This is a warning that may be unnecessary, but I'm giving it in any case. You are about to read a transcription of things said that were for me at the time quite profound. If they affect you in a likewise manner, that is great. If not, that's OK, too. What's important to note, and this is going to sound a bit iconoclastic but it has to be said, is that simply because something strikes you as enlightened doesn't mean the author is necessarily enlightened (I'm not talking about the Brothers here—I'm talking about what you are likely to run into if you go looking for your own teacher sometime down the line). As an example, in the early 1980's the following ad was placed in Time magazine:[2]

> RELATIONSHIP . . . Friendliness is the highest peak of love. Don't be attached to anything. Live; live totally. Live lovingly, but don't possess, don't dominate and don't allow anyone to possess or dominate you. Very rare and few people rise to the level of human love. Human love is friendship; animal love is possessiveness. Animal love reduces the other to a thing, to a commodity. Human love raises the other, helps the other to come to their flowering. It does not use the other as a means. It respects the others as an end unto themselves. It is pure friendship.

The author of this seemingly benign series of statements was a "guru" from India named Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. He and several thousand adherents had taken up residence in Oregon and the ad was designed to draw still more adherents to his ashram there.

On the surface, the quote seems innocuous enough, even, possibly, enlightened, and it undoubtedly hit a nerve for some as he attracted over time a fair number of Wall Street types to his lair. What was not obvious from the quote was that the man encouraged worship *of himself* by his followers. During the four years he was in Oregon, before he was finally deported, he not only accumulated 93 Rolls-Royces (all bought for him

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[2] I have this because I used to do a session with my E.Phil folks in which I'd talk about supposed gurus who were kicking around in the Western world. To that end, I'd collected a mountain of ads and press releases from individuals over the years which I'd share with my kids. This quote came from that file.

by his devotees as an expression of "his little joke on the universe"), he also had amongst his followers individuals who were willing to committed murder as a response to the local Oregonians' outrage at the cult's high-handed dealings with them.

The point is (and again I apologize for stating the obvious, but) simply because someone writes something that sounds enlightened, that doesn't mean they are (and this is especially true even if all they are asking from you in return is adulation).[3]

I realize this may appear to be me undermining what I'm about to present, but it's not. I'm long gone. I'm not angling for anything from you. You coming into contact with the Brothers in this life isn't very likely as that isn't the way things work, so your reading what is about to come is going nowhere except, possibly, to lighten your load a bit. In short, there will be no place for you to sign up at the end of this chapter. There are no ulterior motives here.

4.) Continuing on, and this is subtle, but the way the spoken word affects a listener is not just related to where that listener is in an inner sense, it is also intimately related to the *quality of the Being* who is uttering those words.

As an example, Christ in person saying the words, "Love thy brother

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3 I wrote what you just read in the early 2000's. It is now 2018, and Netflix just came up with a documentary on Rajneesh called "Wild, Wild Country." It is a three-part series in which the first two parts paint the residents of Antelope, Oregon, the city Rajneesh and his followers more or less took over in the early 1980's, as xenophobic (which they probably were), and Rajneesh and his people as simple, spiritual, benevolent souls just trying to make something good out of a wasteland. I have no doubt that a lot of good was done for the people who followed Rajneesh, and I have no doubt that Rajneesh himself was a very knowledgeable, charismatic teacher who spoke truths his followers found irresistible, given the tenure of their lives to date, so I can imagine being swept up into a movement like that would be quite easy. The two telltale sign, though, that let you know you weren't dealing with someone from the Brotherhood, were: Rajneesh's widespread dissemination of chaotic breathing exercises designed to force open the kundalini (the kundalini is a spiritual fire that resides dormant at the base of the spine)—this can have nothing but devastating consequences for those who participate as the opening of the kundalini in most everyone will do nothing more than inflame the sexual energies (this was quite evident in the "free love" spirit of the place); and Rajneesh's acceptance of adulation from his followers, which is hardly the sign of a fully enlightened teacher. So as is the case with most "spiritual" movements, I'm sure people came out of the experience better off than they might otherwise have been, and who knows, maybe he was a chela unaware who was doing the best he could and just kind of got skewed off the path, but given all the Brothers said about spirituality, I'm quite sure this was not the fully enlightened Being he was presenting himself as being.

as you would love thyself" will carry with it a tone that is considerably different than my saying those same words. Christ was a Being who saw to the heart of life. I am not that person. The stream of lovingness, the stream of insight, the stream of energy that was at that Being's command, those are not at my command. So the words might be the same, but what *rides* on the words as He verbalizes them will, in an inner sense, be different.

It was the same with the Brothers. Kay's intoning their words was more than just Kay intoning their words. On the sound rode a meditative energy—the Brothers' energy—that is not to be found in a written transcript (or, for that matter, even on the recording tape—the energy flowed in the moment).

In short, the quotes you will be reading still carry a punch, but there was more going on under the surface in our meetings.

5.) Before I begin, I should like to mention that there were five books I read when I started out that had to do with the Brothers and that really lit me up. The first was *The Mahatma Letters* to A.P. Sinnett; the second was *The Masters and the Path* by Charles Leadbeater; the third was *The Voice of the Silence* by Blavasky; the fourth was the novel, *Om, the Secret of Abhor Valley* by Talbot Mundy; and the fifth was *The Lost Light* by Alvin Boyd Kuhn. If you are interested, these are definitely books to try to find, though some, I believe, are out of print.[4]

6.) When I wrote *Eastern Philosophy for Western Minds, A Search for the Jewel in the Lotus* for my students (this should still be available for free downloaded at http://faculty.polytechnic.org/cfletcher, assuming the school hasn't removed it by now), I used quotes from a lot of sources and I used them in a couple of different ways. Specifically, each chapter started with a quote or two that was designed to set the tone for the chapter, there were quotes used inside the chapters to animate ideas, and tons were put in *Appendix I* just because I liked having the quotes around and wanted somehow to include them into what I was writing (remember, the book was not a commercial endeavor and was originally for the sole use of my E.Phil students).

A fair number of those quotes came from my personal notebooks. That meant they came from the Brothers. I like blessings, which the Brothers gave regularly, so many of the quotes were blessings. In any case, two problems arose due to my presentation of the quotes.

[4] You should be able to find them in antiquarian bookshops or, who knows, on the Internet.

First, sometimes the Brothers would use quotes that were from public sources—that is, from sources that are available to you and me. They did this often, and when they did it they always cited where the quote came from.

If a quote was lengthy and I didn't have time to write it out as the Brothers spoke through Kay, I would get the goods later by listening and transcribing from the tape recording we always made during the meetings. Unfortunately, I never took the time to include the quote's source. Neither did I include sources in the notes I took *while* the Brothers were speaking.

Why the lapse? I was never interested in *who* said what, just in *what* was said. That, and because I never dreamed that I would ever use the quotes for anything other than my own self. When I *did* begin to incorporate them into the E.Phil. book, all I could do was write "unattributed" next to them and hope that the individuals who made the statements weren't so ego-bound that they would be upset with the lack of attribution.

The second problems had to do with quotes that originated with the Brothers. I didn't attribute live quotes from the Brothers *to* the Brothers because I felt I had no right to connect myself to the Brotherhood in the minds of my students in the first place. I was not an accepted chela. Even if I had been, I never would have traded on that distinction. Besides, would *you* believe someone who started his eastern philosophy class out with the statement, *oh, yeah, and there are these enlightened Beings, you know, the guardians of humanity—them and me are like this* (as I crossed my index and middle finger in the age old sign of oneness).

More to the point, if there is one thing I've learned over the years, it is that people don't give you respect because you hold a title or know people in power (they may fear you, but they don't afford you respect). People give you respect only if you are a *respectable person*. I needed to draw students into my sphere of influence through my own devices, not through supposed connections with Mahatmas.

7.) I have eleven full-sized notebooks full of quotes and transcriptions from the weekly meetings. My original intent was to pull as much material from that source as possible. Upon re-reading what I've done to date, though, I can see that less is more. Hopefully, what I've picked out will do something for you.

8.) The footnotes in the first section are there to give you a feel for how I used the quotes in my daily life, and how they affected my early way

of thinking. The quotes you find in the second section, though, are from the E.Phil book. They are also from the Brothers. The difference: these are the ones that actually bring a tear to my eye.

9.) I would suggest you read this chapter over a period of time. Why? An analogy will explain.

I was out in my yard weeding in the late afternoon a few days ago. A Santa Ana wind had blown away the smog, and the sky was deep blue with wisps of lacy clouds interspersed here and there. As the sun went down, it played off the clouds creating a stunningly magnificent, red sunset.

I just sat, looking, and after a while I noticed something interesting. The longer I watched, the less the sunset affected me. It was as though I was becoming de-sensitized to its beauty.

I went back to my weeding. A minute or so later, I looked back up. There it was again, staggeringly beautiful. I just needed a little time away from it to have its full affect take hold once more.

The quotes you are about to read have the potential of being a lot like that sunset. If you are like me, you will read the first few pages, be gently blown away by the depth of thought that is there, then kind of glaze over as you read on. My suggestion, assuming you *are*, indeed, like me, is the same suggestion I make in the E.Phil. book. Read a few quotes, then put it aside. In fact, read a little, then go to the next chapter with the understanding that later, you will return and take up where you left off in this chapter.

You certainly don't have to take the advice (and, in fact, it is more true for the quotes you will find in the second section than the first), but what follows has levels to it. The superficial level is very enjoyable, but the deeper sides are downright blissful. You will not see the latter if you blow through the chapter like a tornado.

10.) And a last, additional comment: Kindly remember that if you happen to see something you know has come from a literary source but is unattributed here, the lack of attribution is *my* fault, not the fault of the Brothers.

So here we go . . . a few of the things the Brothers said to my group through Kay over the twenty-five years we were together.

_____xxx_____

_____xxx_____

[**The following is a sampling from 1978.** Note that because this was toward the beginning of the group's time, a lot of what the Brothers talked about had to do with the way each individual looked and dealt with the world.]

It is better to be *kind* than it is to be *right*.[5]

See experience coming. Allow it to give its gift. Take the best of the gift, and let the rest go. If it will not leave, it means you haven't yet seen what is there for you to see. Be aware of the teaching aspect of those around you. The pot that is dirty can be cleansed by dripping drops for a century, or it can be scoured. You have asked to be scoured.

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[5] My not realizing this *so* animated many of my problems in early (and later) life. If I saw something that wasn't right, I'd ram it down the throat of the individual who was out of line, completely ignoring the fact that in most cases, aggressive, self-righteous, direct confrontation was only going to make the other defensive and wasn't going to help solve the problem at all.

You have to observe the state that others exist in. Observe first with lovingness. If they are showing you their painfulness, decide how you should react. Sometimes, it will be best to be gentle. Other times, not. But at all times, do what you do in lovingness.[6]

See if you can find one of your own *hidden addictions* this week, and see what you can do about it.[7]

To practice compassion, you must retrain the muscles of the emotional body. The reaction to strike out must be subdued; the reaction of self-protectiveness must be looked at; the unwillingness to cope with beings whose vibration and bearing is abrasive, this must be looked at, also.[8]

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[6] I once asked the Brothers if I had any psychic energy about me. They said *yes*, that I had the ability to see beneath the surface of things to people's motives. Even though I didn't see this as a psychic ability, I still thought, "How terrific. I can see beneath." What I didn't realize was that if I didn't look with a kindly eye, if I didn't love enough, then seeing would simply make me angry at the child-selves of others. Unless lovingness underlies your sight and actions, having inner sight is not such a wonderful thing.

As an additional note, I have to say that dealing with this requires serious discipline but is relatively simple. When faced with someone who is acting despicably, if I remembered that standing quietly behind that selfish, in-turned self is another Being, a Teacher Self, a High Mind just like the Higher Self that supports me (and that works with my child-self to help it/me learn how to skillfully negotiate life and freedom of will), when I remembered that, then my view of the individual changes and I am able to give him or her a blessing, even when the individual doesn't on the surface appear to deserve it. This is, I suspect, very similar to what Gandhi was doing when he dealt with the British before India's independence.

[7] I remember one period of time at the end of my college career when I became aware of my almost incessant tendency to angle. There was always a part of me, so close that it was hidden from sight, that was willing to hedge, willing to lie just a little bit, willing to do whatever was necessary to get what I wanted. When I stepped back and saw this, it was a very big eye-opener to the ways of my child-self.

[8] After thinking long and hard about this, I had what was very much a Mystery Schools kind of dream. I was sitting in a darkened room, completely unable to see. Without warning, someone grabbed me around the neck and cut off my air. What was amazing was that my absolute first reaction was to send the assailant a blessing. And as I did, the hands just sort of dissolved away and I was safe again. It was a very powerful, very real experience, even if it was only a dream.

If you were my chela and were around me, and I said something that pointed out a problem in you, how would you respond? Each man that approaches you and affects your ego is a teacher, and is to be so honored.[9]

Set the mind so that no matter what is done, you remain in a state of compassion. First, look to see around the beings to see why they are acting as they are. Then work for them. Some will be angry. They will not accept kindness. This must be received in compassion.[10]

The basis of the Brotherhood is building, but we know the negative side has to be cleansed. We work with you because we know that within you is the deep desire to proceed. We also know about the perils of the path. When the higher side of the self tries to rise up and take control, the Dweller within rises up and fights for its life.[11]

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[9] I have found it remarkable how completely life reflects the state of my being. When friction comes and I respond badly, there is always something in the experience that educates me to the shortcomings of myself . . . even if I see it only after the fact. All I have to do is set aside the tendency to blame the other fellow—even if it is truly his or her fault—and ask the question, "What is it about the way I am dealing with life that has drawn me into this situation?" Doing that, the gift shows itself in all its glory.

[10] Being able to do something like this requires a complete attentiveness to the moment. I was fairly aggressive when I was young. Being on top of a situation meant not letting anyone walk away from a confrontation thinking they had won. The idea of approaching a stressful situation in real life with compassion as my automatic default position was something I understood in theory, but was wholly new to me as a way to actually deal with life. It creates a whole other definition of winning.

[11] Again, boy, is that ever true.

You are shadows, my children, and think you are real.[12]

"As God wills," is the dull response, the forced acceptance. It shows a lack of initiative to understand. "Praise God," *said in the face of difficulty*, is to give thanks for the experience. That is the response of the uncommon man. You have asked to be the uncommon man.[13]

Look at how you explain to yourself *why* you do what you do.[14]

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[12] I love imagery like this. It trips the mind into an interesting meditation . . .

[13] It is interesting that "as God wills" is a relatively standard, knee-jerk expression in the Muslim world. For those who think that this quote is somehow striking out at that tradition, it isn't. The Master who was speaking when I wrote this quote down was from Egypt. He was outwardly Muslim. It is also interesting to note that "Praise the Lord" is a relatively standard, knee-jerk expression within the Christian world, but rarely have I heard it when times were tough . . . and rarer yet have I seen it motivated by a true gratitude for the coming of difficult experiences.

[14] This is a fairly typical Walking Meditation that they would give us. I would go about my daily life as usual, but underneath the surface I would have this constant undercurrent of activity occupying my day. It required constant ATTENTION TO THE MOMENT.

You are constantly creating worlds (of thought). They flow out of you and join with other similar worlds. You are, my children, builders. That is why *what you think* is so important. If you find a terrible world within, it is your right to change it by taking your energies out of it. Everything is obedient to your spiritual will. It is what makes you experience and learn. My hope is that one day, you will be able to grab hold of a piece of negativity and transmute it.

When you change, you must realize you have changed. You are no more the way you were. You are different.[15]

Watch the daydreaming. It is the ego trying to be what it thinks it wants to be, but is not.[16]

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[15] As obvious and mundane as it might seem, the implications of this are enormous. There is a whole chapter coming up that speaks to it.

[16] Boy, is that ever true!

How you act will determine how you are accepted.[17]

Step aside within yourself. Watch the actions of the self as though it was a part of a play.

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[17] Two points of order: First, this observation was aimed specifically at the members of our group, which consisted not of blacks or Hispanics or Asians but of middle-class whites (this is important because the kinds of obstacles-to-living that whites face are not the same as the kinds of obstacles blacks, etc., face). Second, I could devote an entire chapter to all the ways this quote might not seem to work in today's society for blacks and Hispanics and Asians, but if I did I would end with the observation that everyone carries a kind of auric tone around them, and everyone carries a karma, and all of that has a lot to do with the experiences one is drawn into in a given life. (If you are a cop who throws his or her weight around at traffic stops, the tone you carry will not elicit respect from a black man, but if you are a black man who expects all cops to be racist pigs, the tone you are carrying will not elicit respect from a cop--you may feel perfectly justified in your thinking, but the tone will still be there. The tone you and I carry with us is very complex, so even someone who appears to be a saint may be hassled by *the man*. All one can reasonably do is try as hard as possible to know thyself, and to carry as compassionate and kindly a tone about one's-self as possible). Additionally, when it comes to a *highly evolved Being*, skin-color or one's religious affiliation has little to do with how one is received. (The Brothers told us a story about when the British were leaving India in 1947 and Hindus and Moslems were slaughtering one another in an attempt to wrestle control of the country in the power vacuum that resulted. A Hindu mob descended upon a mosque with intent to kill everyone inside. The imam of the mosque, who was a very benevolent man (most probably a chela), chose to go out into the fevered, frenzied crowd and talk to them. Those around him inside the mosque were sure he would be killed, but he entered the fray and by the very nature of his presence and kindness of his words calmed the insanity, essentially bringing the mob's members back to being human again (all driven by nothing more than the quality of his Being). This is obviously an exceptional situation, but the tone you carry can affect others in a profound way . . .).

As for me, what the quote has meant is that when I find myself in the company of people who don't know me, I expect no respect due to my job or how much money I have or who I know, because I know the individuals will not know me from Adam. All they will sense, assuming there isn't some kind of karmic knot working itself out, is the quality and tone of my Being. If I've built into myself qualities that can be respected, they will be.

The ones who have been the most quiet have been the most potent. The world remembers the loud ones, but not with honor.

When one makes the self a true spiritual force, you draw others to you. So what do you do with this force field? Many have fallen here! The child says, "Now that I have their attention, I can do more" . . . and the ego has gained the upper hand.

If you can focus yourself on a level that does not judge circumstance, you step clear of a lot of the lesser-self. A lot of life is cleansing, a lot testing. If you can set yourself on high and watch this growing, it has a very fine effect on the self.

The greatest discipline is *to be aware*. If you observe the child long enough, you can change its thrust as it is contemplating or taking action. You can see if its action is what you would wish it to be, and act accordingly.[18]

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[18] And we are back to ATTENTION TO THE MOMENT. If you are not *attentive to the moment*, circumstance will flow around you and sweep you away to whatever response your child-self has built into itself for self-preservation. Only if you are attentive (as versus reacting on instinct) can you be the one who decides how you will act and react.

The kind of attitude a man holds carries in the sound around him. If a man is sad, he carries a sad sound around him. If a man is compassionate, he carries a compassionate sound around him. If a man is an egotist, he carries an egotist's sound around him.

I walk with you, my children, along a path you have not yet explored. The first step? If the voice of disharmony is heard within, make it as quiet as you can. You can shout disharmony, or you can whisper it. It is still there, but better as a whisper.

The more power you have, the more veiled it should be so that you can use it without opposition. The more goodness you have, the more veiled it should be so that you do not lose humility.

Irritation is the fence that is put up so that the self does not disturb its habit patterns. It is a prickly, thorny barrier. We set it up so we will not be disturbed. The personal mind constantly hides behind these fences, and it ignores that usually, what we dislike in others, we have a proportion of in ourselves.[19]

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[19] Find something irritating in others? How clever of nature and karma. You're seeing a mirror of yourself in them!

To be considerable in achievement and considerable in ego . . . not the way.

Do you withhold love from people who are doing things you think they shouldn't? It has been observed of you. There should be nothing that would put you off in the service of others. There should be nothing that would shock you. You should look to understand, then act.[20]

There is no defense against love.

You are constantly swimming in a sea of thought.[21]

Attention to your motives. What is causing satisfaction and dissatisfaction? Learn to view each from the Higher Mind.[22]

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[20] This was an odd observation for the Brothers to have made in the small meeting, as I don't know that everyone in the meeting would have had this problem . . . though it does seem to be a human characteristic, so maybe it was. It certainly was a problem for me, having had a long history of not letting anyone, especially women, get away with doing anything that didn't seem to be in my best interest. How embarrassing.

[21] I'm going to say a whole lot more about this in later chapters.

[22] Another Walking Meditation.

The child-self is deliberately blind to the things the best in you wishes to rid itself of. Your blind spots are protections around cherished habit patterns. Pure lovingness can break these.

There can be joy in learning, but no pride in it.
There can be joy in skill, but no pride in it.
There can be joy in being able to handle yourself in a reasonable way, but no pride in it.

It is not the great disasters that irritates, it's the little discommodings. The personal self is not willing to be discommoded. This is where we have to make effort. If you love, have you any cause for emotional anger? Anger comes when the lesser is exposed and discommoded.

Observe how many judgments your mind makes to what it feels is not the norm. How often are these *making fun of* or *unkind*? Each individual is due your respect, not your derision. You do not need to respect their actions, but you do need to respect them.[23]

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[23] There is a difference between making an observation and making a judgment. For me, when I'm on my game, making an observation usually ends with my giving a mental blessing.

Love is the power to see deeply into another's heart, to see that spark in the most pitiable being that speaks out and says *understand*.[24]

Live as though you were an actor in a scene. Do what seems best in the situation, but don't be attached to it.[25]

You may be out of sight of man, but you are never out of sight of the universe. When you are alone, you are not really alone.[26]

To those most ugly in themselves, we give the most love, for they are the most in need of it. To those who are less ugly, we give blessing and move on.[27]

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[24] I can remember times when I've looked passed the child-self of someone I've really despised, and given a blessing to that part of that Being that is attuned to the High Self in all of us. It does seriously change the tone of the interaction between myself and that individual.

[25] I'd have never thought to do this before the Brothers, but since then I've found myself in two states at once (at least most of the time). There is the part of me that acts and the part of me that watches me act.

[26] You are never alone . . . a very powerful thought.

[27] Being beautiful has its practical application, but it is not a blessing. If nothing else, it has the potential of lulling the individual into a delusion that they are special amongst humans, above and beyond the superficial.

This last week, have you stood in the shoes of another? Have you lessened a lesser attitude within yourself to some extent?[28]

To be given responsible work, there must be responsibility.
To further the cause of love, there must be lovingness.

Consider: If you were preparing to do a task for the Brotherhood, how would you prepare. What would help and what would hinder?[29]

You forget to love when you move to defend. It blocks the compassionate mind. Pride, fears, insecurities, they all demand *what I want* over the needs of others.

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[28] Another Walking Meditation.

[29] This was an interesting exercise. What would make a chela a chela?

Meditate on *love*. It is needed that you arouse that fire. *Stand aside and watch* as the self tries to block and barrier the exercise of that power.[30]

Think to yourself what it must be like to be trustworthy.[31]

When the Kundalini opens, place it in the heart or third eye. If you don't, you will be affected on the lower levels—sexually and by anger and irritation. You will be buried by the fiery side of the Kundalini.[32]

_____x_____
_____x_____
_____x_____

[30] You wouldn't think that being a loving individual would be that hard to do, but setting aside one's wants and desires and acting on behalf of the interests of others without thought of reward . . . not easy to do when your world is the center of your world.

[31] This is something I have wanted to be ever since my first meeting with the Brothers. It is why I became a vegetarian.

[32] The Kundalini is spiritual fire, an energy that sits dormant for most at the based of the spine. In a spiritually awakened individual, it can open and serpent up the spinal column, energizing the chakric energy centers in the body as it goes. Individuals who haven't made an effort along a spiritual path can force the kundalini open—kundalini yoga is, in fact, designed to do just that—but when it opens on people like that . . . *if* it opens, which is rare . . . the energy just sits in the first chakra, energizing the sexual energies. This is not, in a spiritual sense, a good thing.

[The following comes from the Eastern Philosophy book. Because you may never read that book, I'm including the quotes I really liked from it below. In the E.Phil book, these quotes are all identified as "unattributed" because they were all from the Brothers. Most are either blessings or designed to trip you into meditation.]

If you do not love enough, then time changes around you and it becomes small and everything stands as a barrier to your way.
But when you love enough, you are patient with all states of enclosement and consciousness.
When you love enough, you see beyond the instinctual patterns that nature uses to perpetuate itself.
When you love enough, you are full of perception.
When you love enough, there is always time enough.

There is an eternity in which you live. This should neither make you slothful nor hurried.
There is time enough to undertake consideration of everything around you.
There is time enough for a kind thought.
If you think there is not, you are compressing yourself into a very small knot of self, and that is a very small thing, indeed.

It is better to *kind* than it is to be *right*.[33]

For those who carve out a place solely for themselves—a security spot—on the edge of that place will be weeping.[34]

I remember an old man who said to me, "It took me seventy years to find that if I sat down without thought, there was usually a splinter waiting for me. But if I took some thought to smooth in my mind the patterns in me that were heavy and sharp, then I found that the splinters did not stick."

Take time to smooth in your mind by understanding and lovingness the sharp places in and around you. Then, where you sit will not be sharp even though there may be stones everywhere.[35]

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33 I'm repeating myself, but this was one of the most powerful things the Brothers ever said to me personally. It was short and simple, and it may not seem like much to you, but for me at the time, given all the effort I had put into attempting to control my temper, it was huge.

34 Another of the most powerful things the Brothers ever said to our group. I'll say more about this in Chapter 24.

35 This is a very clever way of pointing out how completely your thinking shapes your world, even on the physical level. It is one of my favorite quotes.

Until you can set aside the small self and enlarge yourself into principle;
Until you cannot fear the universe but rather love it;
Until you can give without thought of return of any kind;
Until you can view all action with compassion and not allow yourself to be drawn into negative response because you are angry or disturbed;
Until you can see as the Sun sees—all things lighted from the fire of your own understanding;
Until all these things come to pass, the walls of the personal-self will imprison you.
And even though you will think you are free, things will annoy you;
things will hurt you;
you will feel depressed or you will feel over-excited;
you will be too pleased with yourself or not pleased enough.
You will, in short, lurch from states of change to other states of change, a kind of bouncing ball between perception and emotion—and you will never achieve the kind of satisfaction that your personal self so desperately desires.
This will continue until your child-self comes to realize through experience that the only real, lasting happiness it will ever have is when it aligns itself with the god-like part of you, the High Mind, and moves upon *the Way*.

I walk along and I set aside a stone that might be uncomfortable for someone. I pick up a fallen thing. I bring along with me a light of regard for all that I see, and I see the beauty and wonderful splendor that exists in all things. I ask of my High Mind that I should be able to put that harmony into my hand so that all the Consciousnesses of nature, when they feel me coming, will smile.[36]

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[36] In one of the lives I was let in on, I developed a very strong rapport with animals. The idea of being such a trustworthy soul that *the Consciousnesses of nature* would trust me not to harm them, for me, was very moving. It had a lot to do with why I became a vegetarian. It was hard envisioning my *younger brothers* trusting me on the one hand if I was eating them on the other.

"It was given to the eye to have Light to see," says an old book. "And even though you may be blind, you can see if you have the Light. But if you have not the Light and do not believe it is there, then you see only bits and pieces of the wonders and the beauties of the universe. And you will illumine nothing inside yourself or outside either."[37]

A man approached a spiritual Teacher seated by a stream, sat down, then asked, "What must I do to reach enlightenment?"

The Teacher said, "Look into the stream."

As the man did, the Teacher grabbed him by the back of the neck and forced his head under the water, holding it there for a very long time. Finally, with the man's arms frantically flailing about, the Teacher released him and he came up gasping for breath.

"When you want enlightenment as badly as you wanted that breath," said the Teacher, "then you will make way for its coming."

There are many ways to move something out of your path. You can kick it, and that may remove it but it might also break your toe. If nothing else you will have raised a lot of dust and created a center of negativity for which you will be responsible. Or you could pick it up, bless it for doing its duty, and gently place it off the road. In that way, you will have done no harm and you will have raised no dust in your passing.[38]

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[37] What a wonderful thought, that a part of humankind's divinity is a Light that might be used to illuminate the way for others.

[38] Ah, to raise no dust in one's passing . . .

When the “I” speaks of the “I”, it speaks of nothing.
But when the “I” speaks of the whole of which it knows itself one, it speaks of all things.

If I could shatter each shell of self for you and let in the Light, I would do so. But none can break the mold of mind except the self within. The shells are the accumulated hardnesses that have grown up through karmic choices through many lifetimes. So look to see where and what the self is. Then for a moment, having given gratitude for existing within the heart of God, look to see how you can harmonize with the One.

Let the mind be large and not small;
Let the self be a server of thought rather than a demander of satisfaction;
Set yourself in the ways of wisdom that moves in the reality of your true spirit;
For if you do, you will be able to stand in the face of disharmony and, in doing so, be of use to those who haven’t the strength.[39]

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[39] “. . . to those who haven’t the strength” . . . that number is legion.

He who walks steadily, who is not in haste but who is neither a laggard;
He who is not fearful, yet neither is he foolhardy;
He who is not deterred in the face of any threat; who can look at anything and not be shocked for he has nothing in him which is like that which he sees so he can view it with understanding and detachment;
He is the one who will go forward, for he has come into a state of harmony.
He treads the Middle Way.

I was in darkness until I realized that there was Light within it;
I was alone until I knew that everything touched me and was a part of me and that I could not be separate;
I was fearful until I saw that the wheels of the universe turned in perfect balance;
And I thought there was nowhere to go until I saw the long path among the stars and in the invisible worlds, which I had not dreamed existed.

Shall my Light go out? No, for there is no wind that can blow it out. Its oil comes from lovingness, and that has no end.
I have the power to see the step ahead and to choose to step upon it.

What more could I ask of the gifts of life than this amazing and upholding universe that gives me the ability to participate in the choices of the One Mind.
Let me honor the High Self.
Let me hold to that reality in the midst of the changing pressures of the learning world.

Whatever you think the world is, you will make the world that thing. The drug addict, no matter where he is, will bring with him his addictiveness. The skid row mentality can exist within a palace.

There are the Rings-Pass-Not that hold us in situations of distress. What do you think these restraints are? They are the illusions we build and set around reality. Until you can pass through them, you will not see further.[40]

A man lives either in time or in eternity.
He who lives under time lives with the prospect of irritation.
He who lives in eternity lives with the knowledge that time is enough.
He who lives in time finds his horizons moving always away from him.
He who lives in eternity has already reached the horizon and can look beyond.
Give honor in your heart, then, to eternity; and give use to time so that it does not use you.

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[40] How many people do you know who are in a bad marriage they won't leave, or doing a dead-end job they are afraid to discard, or have a mental addiction to anger or jealousy or pride they refuse to shake. I know a bunch. I am also not immune to any of it.

What are you?
True, you are a unit of self-interest—but you are more. You are a unit that can move; a unit that can devise your own awakening.
Awakening comes in the efforts of everyday affairs.
Are you kind when you don't have to be?
Do you look with compassion in the face of negative action?
Are you mindful of how you should put your foot, that it not be harmful?
Are you mindful of your hand, that it should heal when it touches?
Are you mindful of your thoughts, that they do not reinforce negativity?
Are you mindful of your voice, that it does not cut?
Awakening comes when these gifts of right attention are yours.

To be clear sighted, able to see the whole without the distortion of the personal mind's desires;
To be able to help in any situation with the utmost of loving compassion;
To need no defense;
To assess one's motives for great acts and small ones alike with equal consideration;
To be cheerful in the face of all things;
To have gratitude for all the smaller and greater consciousnesses that support you;
To see the beauty in all that upholds you;
To act in the interest of the whole of life, not in the interest of the small self;
These acts put you in the company of the Buddhas.

If we look through the glasses of illusion, some things will look like monsters while others like angels. But when we look clearly, we will see that even the dark angels are moving under the karmic Law.

May your mind unfold, your heart beat gently.
May the work of your hands prosper and may the energies that belong to life come to you in harmony.

There is nothing in the Law that says you must react in negative ways. If you do, that is your choice.
Many say, "I just could not help it." There is nothing in the Law that says that this is true.
Many say, "But I could not see." There is nothing in the Law that says you *may* not.

The personal mind will tell you all its best aspirations, then in the same voice begin its litany of wants. It has very little spiritual discrimination.

Can you see what you are?
Can you see where you are going?
Can you perceive what it means to exist in a universe without death?
Can you perceive the power of goodness, which looks very small up against the blackness of negativity?

Loving yourself has to be redefined. Certainly, love the effort your child makes, but don't say "You're OK" when in fact it isn't. That is not love; that is foolishness.

Karma: it will not harm your spirit but it will certainly hit upon the sore spots within the child-self and the ego.

Suffering is not suffering if it is used to understand.

No true Teacher would ever give a hint as to how to develop powers to a being who, in the smallest of things, was inconsiderate; who, in the smallest of dealings with life, was not mindful to an extreme of being as harmless as possible; who was not able to control the ebb and flow of the emotional body; who was not so rooted in principle that he would give his life out of body rather than set aside one bit of his trust.[41]

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[41] This observation is clearly lost on the so-called spiritual teachers who have roamed the western world over the last forty or so years. I especially like the guy who touted his Kundalini Yoga class as a way to "improve your sexual prowess." Yikes. Talk about scary!

Take heed of the use of the eye, for if it becomes ensnared by looking upon objects of desire and entrapped by what is believed to be beautiful, it will then be setting aside your first hope, the ability of clear sight.
Take heed of the use of the ear, for if it is not used fully and clearly and without prejudice, you will be setting aside your first prize, the privilege of hearing.
Take heed of the use of the tongue, for if it is used unwisely and wounds, it will turn upon you and you will lose your first duty, the privilege of serving your fellows and the whole of life.

Men who pass up what is good lose not only the good but also the ability to recognize the good. In doing so, they leave behind a monument to their foolishness.[42]

Quietly, without stress and without fear, look at yourself as you would a beloved child who is growing and trying to understand. Then help that child. If it has toys that it likes to use such as anger, say "Let's set this aside for a time and see what else there is that we might use." If you won't play the good parent, who can it turn to?[43]

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[42] On the June 1, 2017 *New Yorker Radio Hour* podcast, Rev William Barber made some interesting observations. Speaking about *conservatism* and, by extension (I think), the Republican party, he said, "they are so *loud* on things like abortion and prayer in schools, and so *quiet* about health care and a living wage and acceptance of all people and the treatment of the poor." He pointed out that there are 3500 scriptures in the Bible about love and justice and mercy and the way you treat others, and, maybe, 3 on homosexuality. Yet conservatives have seemingly dismissed those 3500 scriptures, focusing rather on the 3 and misinterpreting even those. "Men who pass up what is good and kind lose the ability to even recognize good and kind." How sad, and yet this is the Kali Yuga, the time when karma makes the paths so very easy to see, the right-hand and the left-hand path.

[43] Again, even though it is superficially understandable, an eastern perspective makes this quote into a whole other thing.

The Higher Law (karma) is one of change. As a human changes his or her attitudes, nature will change its response. Once you come to know that, you will need fear the growing pains of humanity no longer.

The Law (karma) gives certain powers to the obsessively evil. Why? Because on this level they are the ultimate teachers. It is not the joys that you remember as changing you. It is the presence of negativity that finally makes you see that this is not the way: not the way of lovingness; not the way to grow an immortal soul.

May the work of your right hand and your left hand be equal.
May your right hand know its duty to the left, and the left to the right,
And may they both know their duty to the One who is All.

May your thought of this day be as sunlight, knowing no shadow in itself and giving of its light and understanding to all.

It is the One in the many that I love, and the many in the One.
When I have come to see that these are the same,
then the peace and the power and the strength of Allah shall be mine.[44]

That which resides in the heart is smaller than a seed of mustard;
smaller than the smallest grain of barley;
smaller than the canary seed;
smaller yet than the inner seed of that seed.
Yet that which lives within the heart is greater than all things.

All that we are is a result of what we have thought. The mind is everything. What we think, we become.

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[44] This blessing, another of my favorites, was given to us by one of the Teachers who is located in Egypt and, hence, works through the Moslem tradition.

First comes the promise.
Then comes the discipline of the hand and the heart and the foot.
We move in the best way we know, and in that we change the stream of energies and desires around us until the things we most admire are those that are the better and the best.
We come at last to a vital sense of the (karmic) Law.
There is no harm in us for we hold an inexhaustible store of Love.
Nothing can shock us; nothing can cause fear.
And because we see clearly and with Love, there is no power in this world or the next that can set us off our Way.[45]

It is not easy to walk the path. It needs the constant thought, the constant decision. The personal mind says, "I do not wish to be always on guard. I do not wish to always have this responsibility. I simply want to feel, to live, to run like a child without care."
Yet the child must grow up. If it does not it will go through life crushing and destroying because It is a child and knows no better.
Run no longer; move upon the Way.

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[45] . . . *there is no power in this world or the next that can set us off our Way.* This is the hallmark of a chela, the steely look behind the eye that says to the world, "I will do my duty to the whole of life." I have no words to describe how deeply I respect the Beings who have taken that step.

Come out of the tomb of the little self.
Forget its fears; forget its limitations;
Forget the little petty things that it feels so necessary.
Stand free, beautiful, serene, immortal, potent, a creative being beyond belief.
That is the true Self.
If you hold to that Self and choose all things on behalf of that Self, then one day that Self will become evident within you.

Live in harmony, which is compassion,
which is love,
which is goodness in action.

If there were not the spur of discomfort, we would not move. If we had not the contrast on this level between that which is good and that which is evil, we would not be able to choose to go forward. It is not by mistake that this plane is dual in every respect.

If you choose to live in the world, remember that you are a server, not a victim. There is a difference.

Thought sticks to walls like paint.[46]

Because there is darkness and storm, is the sky any less blue?[47]

When one pays attention to the present, there is a great pleasure in the awareness of small things.[48]

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[46] This metaphysical observation is intimately connected to the idea that thought has energy and form and a kind of life unto itself. This is kind of important to understand. I'll be talking more about it in later chapters.

[47] Ahhh, perspective . . .

[48] *Eat when you eat, sleep when you sleep*. This bastardization of a Zen adage nicely summarized the first part of the quote. The second part only comes if you try it yourself.

Each new personality is born from the seeds of the old. A man is his own parent.

When you step across the line, what is it that you will wish to present to the Law, the clear and loving eyes of the Law?
As you stand before It and call up to It and say, "Here I am,"
Who is there?
What is it that is present?
Who is "I?"
What, my friends, is yourself?

I knew a man who had in his house in my village a very poisonous snake. The man was very familiar with the snake and the snake had not had its venom removed. Nevertheless, the snake was quite harmless because all those around him loved him and he trusted them.

The snake gave his effort to the people by threatening the rodents and things that were destructive to the property. And when anyone came into the house who had negative attitudes and fears, when they would come upon the snake suddenly he would raise his head and his hood would go out and he would gaze at them in utmost power and dignity. It almost seemed as though the snake smiled as he watched them retreat from him. He would not bite, but they didn't know that.

He rescued, one day, a child of the family, by threatening another beast that was violent. He gave up, this little being, his life in defense of the child, for he was killed by the other beast but not before the snake had won time for the rescue of the child. And so it is that in an environment of lovingness, even those with venom can become harmless, can become guardians and servers under the natural (karmic) Law.

Let all things speak to you of the wonder and care of the creative minds that are a part of the whole universe.
Become mindful of the upholding love that makes your being possible;
Become mindful of the search and the struggles that exist in others;
Become mindful that beyond the weeping of the lesser-self there is the great and beautiful universe.

Be fully mindful of each moment and you shall be wise.
Be fully mindful of the various shades and degrees of concentration within yourself, and pull them into useful patterns.
Be mindful of the vast concentration of that spirit within and without that says, "There is joy; there is love; there is giving of understanding; there is the healing of destruction; there is the ultimate enlightenment of all things."

To the disciple on the Path of right action, the thought of pain and pleasure grows less; the thought of service grows more.

Friend, beware of Pride and Egoism, two of the worst snares for the feet of him who aspires to climb the high path of Knowledge and Spirituality.

If we understand the treasure of unity and the treasure of the many, then we will understand the form and the not-form. There has to be a flowing quality of that upon which form resides that makes it possible to be. If it were not for the universal energy, which appears as emptiness, there would be no form, nothing to uphold it, no way that it could aggregate itself into universes. It is the same within ourselves. There is fullness and there is emptiness.[49]

The opposite of ego is another form of ego in which you say you are no good.

Evolution has periods of rest, but it never fully stops.

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[49] I talk about *the fullness that is empty,* and *the emptiness that is full* in the E.Phil book. The Brothers didn't talk in paradoxes often, but I particularly liked it when they did. There is something about a paradox that easily trips the mind into meditation.

I looked for paradise. Whenever I asked, someone would say, "Over there, up the hill and on the other side." I was always going up and down hills in every direction. I was so busy moving from one place to another, that every time I passed through paradise I didn't see it.

When we become completely realized—as far as we can go in this evolutionary cycle on earth—what will we leave behind? We will have left a reasonably purified envelope that can become, finally, a self-determining, giving unit that can begin to inform lesser developed units as they come up. Everything is linked to what is above it, and to what is below it, also.[50]

No matter how far we have moved within the world,
if we have not moved with steadiness and justice,
we have not moved an inch.

Do not enclose yourself in the little prisons of the self, in the distorted little cages of mind-sets that you have clung to for so long. It is time to be free.[51]

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[50] I talk about what the child-self is in the E.Phil book. Not as much here . . .

[51] Mindsets are peculiar things. They really do have to be looked at.

We dismiss the machinations and guile and just plain thoughtlessness of the personal self as being unimportant. Yet that is what keeps us from doing the work we should do; that is what jangles the nerves; that is what makes us look for thanks and recognition instead of simply doing what is appropriate, leaving the rest to God.

We are the ones who make the future, and that have made the past.
The great brooding spirit of the Divine Self moves in and around us asking us constantly to observe this and choose that.
And we say, "Yes, but that will interfere with this and this."
Will it?
Those who have truly chosen wisely are supremely happy.
They never say, "I do not have what I want."
That only comes from the voice of the child-self.

I have no parents; I make the sun and the earth my parents.
I have no power; I make the One Law my power.
I have no refuge; I make the One Self my refuge.[52]

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[52] I liked this quote so much I burned it into a piece of wood and gave it to Kay for Christmas one year. It still hangs above the kitchen door at 388.

[**The following is a sampling from 1983.**]

We have a body that is like an old house. It is rubbed and abraded by our thoughts and actions; we have cozy spots, and rooms we keep shut up. We have treasure places where we keep things that are not treasures . . . fears and angers . . .

Find yourself a quiet place (a hilltop) and feel the space around you. Look at the sky and distance and flow into it. Do so and you will not be confined into the small space of yourself . . . and the treasures you have stored there will not look so important.

Look into the sky and let that pure energy flow around you. It is blue because blue is the color of calmness and harmony. It is soothing and healing. Sky colors will bring you into a healing place.

If you consider your light to be something that flickers and has to be protected, then you will walk in uncertainty. If you consider your light to be within the mind of God and you in it, completely filling the universe, then you have no fear of shadows, no fear of your little bit of space.

If you love, you cannot blow your light out. You are not disturbed by the shadows of development and evolution within the millions of selves that work toward enlightenment in every degree of light. You are not fearful of the universe, for the same great love works there in harmony:

When you are away from Home, there is always distress.

When you are Awake, you do not ask if you are happy. You just are.

Ignorance—not to be confused with an *innocence of knowing*—is not seeing, not looking, the deliberate blindness we use when we do not want to press ourselves into understanding.

Selflessness, commitment, and devotion—it all has to do with the opening of the heart.

Time and space are only illusions built from spiritual necessity.[53]

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[53] Although it would probably balk at the spiritual part, even science agrees with the illusion part.

The child-self will do *good* for attention and praise, but if it does not get the praise, it is just as happy doing something bad for attention. Saints simply do what is right to do, but it is so unusual in the stream of humanity that they stand out.

The Higher Mind does not move in anxiety. It is only the personal mind that runs about, uncertain of its values.

The Dweller is the accumulation of all of our negative habit patterns over all of our incarnations. It is the *lesser side* of our *child-self*.[54]

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[54] The Brothers didn't say an enormous amount about *the dweller*, but they did say enough to use the idea in discussion . . . which means you will be running into it in this book. What isn't pointed out above, but what is nevertheless true about it, is that it is a real, live, conscious, sentient existence that is part of you and that will fight you to the death if you try to take away what it thinks it needs to survive. Think *you* when someone suggests you give up chocolate . . . and I'm not being funny here. *The dweller* is a real part of you and anything *but* funny. It is your creation, it is your responsibility, and it is that accumulation and your attachment to it that keeps you from enlightenment.

You do not confront the *Dweller* only in initiations. You do it every day. What about the snake headed Medusa. Why did you have to see it only in reflection? Because if you looked at it, at your *Dweller*, in the face, it would so terrify you that you probably would become inactive (turned to stone). That is why you have to look at the *Dweller* through the experience of life. Life is like a mirror for us.[55]

A man asks, "Where are my demons?"
A voice within answers, "Speaking?"[56]

The Dweller speaks with a familiar voice.
The final argument of the *Dweller*? "Sure, it's possible, but not probable."
If you believe this, you may go for many lives with fear and anxiety.

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[55] The Brothers often examined ancient myths and legends through a metaphysical lens. This is an example.

[56] How subtle. You are your dweller.

Sit quietly and put your mind into a state in which time does not exist.
Sit quietly and put your mind into a state in which *here* is everywhere.
Sit quietly and put your mind into a state in which there are no barriers to the flow of love within.
Sit quietly and put your mind into a state where the maneuvering of the lesser mind has flown away.
Picture this and the lesser-self will not be so hard edged . . .
That will give the High Mind a chance to *quietly peek in* and show understanding.

The perception of the heart is not the same as the perception of the mind. The perception of Love is not the same for the advanced Master. The Master maintains his form for many centuries, not because he wants it but because he has things to do. Because the embodiment is pure, nature responds in the best way possible.[57]

If you wish to become, that does not mean a movement in time, it means an unfolding.

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[57] There were all sorts of stories in Theosophical circles about young people who, having come into contact with a purported Master in early life, came into contact with the Adept sixty years later only to find the Master appearing exactly the same as he or she had sixty years earlier. This kind of thing is the makings of fantasy in the western mind, but if an individual has come to a point where there is no longer the necessity for life to pull and tug at the self, it is not so fanciful.

Carry with you a tone of remembrance. Listen to the whole of life.

The *rooms of the self* are built to be broken, but the mind learns forever. There is a forever, and that forever is *here* and *now*. Do not waste your energy collecting things for your room, for the room will be gone before you hardly realize it. But if you love, your room will be furnished without your having to think about it, with all that is beautiful.

I would not like to see you, as you move in your ways of service, bounded by the small self. It makes you anxious; it makes you hit out at things that are hard to move.

Sit down quietly and watch what you are thinking. How much is focused on future intentions? How much is focused on the past? In the lesser-self, we are always going somewhere, always with one foot up ready to take another step. That is unbalance, and we have no idea where our foot will land when it comes down.[58]

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[58] Sitting and watching . . . a really good, useful discipline.

You are here to find out about your universe from someone who, through discipline, has seen it more widely. The highest amongst us have perception what is remarkable chiefly because they are no longer bounded by time and space. They see a universe living within itself. Each speck of it contains a reflection of the Whole.

You can look at yourself in meditation and touched the vastness of the space of understanding, or you can exist in your closed off rooms in the small self. The problem is that we build these rooms of the things we have perceived. We equate everything by the enclosure in which we have found ourselves. And all of this, then, is part of what we think is reality.

Time can be, for us, a tool or an obsession. Most of us mark everything by time, and then the personal self says, "But I do not have time enough to have all the experiences that I want." It kicks and screams at the idea that one thing must be given up for something else in the envelope of time, because there is not time enough for everything.

So we come to the clash of the time frames—the desire time frames of the personal self and all of what it considers to be its needs, and the other time which is understood by the Higher Mind.

In that Higher frame, a temporary completeness to satisfy some personal-self desire is regarded as not useful if it interferes with a longer perception and a greater sense of reality.

We need of our workers large beings whose edges are not enclosed by the lesser-self, whose territories and desires are not resting on getting satisfaction for the lesser-self.

Let the mind be large and not small. Let the ego be a server of thought rather than a demander of satisfaction. Set yourself in the ways of wisdom that move in the reality of your true spirit. Observe things in calmness and joy and love. Then you can care deeply when disharmonies in other beings shake them and bring them fear. You can help them to relieve that terrible loneliness and anxiety that come from not understanding yourself as a part of the whole.

The caring soul does not put contingencies on its love. It does not stop with those it has affinities with. To those we find abrasive or foolish, we do not react harshly but rather transform their energies and send them back in a loving form. Having spent lifetimes reacting in kind, we do that no more.

We are swimming in a sea of dimensions. We are focused on only one level because we are locked into a body. Because you are not steady, you can use your perception of these other levels only inconsistently. What you perceive as yourself is only a small part of what you are.

We must become less tied to appearance.[59]

As long as you are wedded to the thought of self, you will be threatened by the world.
As long as you are wedded to the thought of self, you will want satisfactions.
As long as you are wedded to the thought of self, you will hate and fear others.

The face of youth is somewhat colorless in comparison to the face of age because on the face of age is etched what has been understood and what has not.[60]

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[59] Another Walking Meditation . . .

[60] It is interesting, there is a kind of tone that flows around people that tells you where they are in life. I've never thought of it as *etched on the face,* but I guess it is.

You go over in death to the other levels (the inner worlds), but in truth you are already there. You already have roots in those levels. All that happens with death is that your focus has changed.[61]

The power we have to limit the self is good if we use it to curb the negative self. This is an abstract thought and it is not. It is as practical as your breath.

Due to differences in development, we find fascination with scientific thought, fascination with meditative thought, fascination with drugs and sound. All want to break through to something that is beyond.[62]

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[61] I'll be talking about this in fair depth in chapters to come . . . and why not, if you are reading this, I should already be "there."

[62] One of the characteristics of humankind is the desire to expand out from the self. Even though some shunt it off for a time, you see this tendency to search everywhere.

The body and the perceptions on this level are tools. They are not things to be satisfied. They are not to be thought unique. They are not something to be tied to completely because that is to be compressed into a small self. Consciousness functions on all levels as it proceeds into knowledge.

We have in the world today people who can reason, but not beyond their mindset.[63]

What makes nervous tension? It is how you are feeling circumstances. If you are fearful and think them unjust, you will be constantly in tension.[64]

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[63] Another of the things I'll be talking about in chapters to come is how one's perspective affects how one see the world. Not earthshaking, but something I've found interesting.

[64] I've found that when I don't see in an experience the pearl of wisdom that is buried there, I'm left tense and perturbed. It's kind of karma's little gift, not letting me get away with squandering a potential enlightenment.

You expect others to give you leeway, to understand that you have problems and mitigating circumstances, but you are often unwilling to give equal understanding to them because you aren't willing to look deeply at their needs.

In general, negative action comes from ignorance. We do not see the need in others, and we are blinded by our own perceived necessities.[65]

You have it in your hands, my children, to form units of right action, to move out in your various ways, to heal, and to help. Do not enclose yourself in these little prisons of self, in these distorted little cages of mind-sets that you have clung to for so long. It is time to be free.

To all beings of all states, true love and true blessing.

[This was the blessings the Brothers ended our meetings with. Once, they said more.]

To all beings of all states, true love and true blessing. What does that mean? It is a very large promise, is it not? It is full of love, and full of power, and full of harmony for yourself of the energies of the universe. That is the dividend—love setting in motion a circle of action that moves from one to the next and always returns to you fulfilled with more energy.

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[65] That was the Buddha's message—that the ills of the world were born out of ignorance of the world. Anything one does to become less ignorant is a true blessing.

But that is not why you should promise it. You should promise it because you have come to a point where that is the only thing you *can* do. We do not need workers who try to be good. We need workers who *are* good.

Suppose there was a town, and everyone there had finally had a realization of this way of action. And it was so strong that they would not be thrust from it by circumstances. What would happen if your average mob of uncertain, emotional people came into the town and, having interacted with the town members, found their way of reaction something not understandable? There would be friction. The ones who did not understand would consider the ones who did to be weak. Then they would consider them foolish, and would probably do some very unpleasant things to them. But if the townsfolk were so completely at one with the universal lovingness, they would not change and gradually the power of the other way of thought would transform and open up these others. They would be in contact with that potent force which is the spark of the divine mind at work within the personal mind. That is a potent thing, stronger than anything else. It can move and change the world.

One mind awake can shake the universe. Gandhi stood for those things that were non-violent and loving. He did not hate his enemies, nor did he seek to get back at them. Why? Because he never thought of them as enemies. He thought of them as Beings. He is one single example of countless other beings who have aroused the minds of men to thought. Then we have the great teachers who have said so many times in so many languages, "do not do to others that which you would not like done to you." And most have heard with one ear but not the other.

When we truly love, we move close to an understanding of the universe as a reality. We get flashes of this when we love honestly and without self but with a giving love. We get flashes of this when we see the wonderful and giving growth of nature. We get flashes of this when we look into the eyes of our younger brothers and see that in spite of our misuse of them, they still give us love and service back.

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As I think I said earlier, I have eight to ten spirally bound notebooks filled with quotes from the Brothers. Each meeting was different, but the overall tone was always the same—what is the hallmark of a server of *the Law* (this was how they termed the Karmic Law); how might someone come into a oneness with the highest within them (the High Mind); how might we make ourselves better human beings.

If I have time in the future, I may try to find and pull out more unique quotes. For now, though, this is going to have to be it.

Chapter 12

Chelas and Masters

The people in my group were not accepted chelas. If anything, we may have qualified as *lay-chelas*, which is to say, probationary folk. Relatively speaking, many are given that chance. But in the glare of the personal self's desire to have what it wants to the exclusion of all else, only rarely does someone take the step from lay-chelahood to chelahood. As I mentioned earlier, the Brothers have said that they consider themselves fortunate if they find one, completely accepted chela in a hundred years. I can see from my own inner battles how difficult that step is.[1] Yet with all of our shortcomings, the Brothers worked with us patiently for the entire time we had contact with them.

What was heartening about the path to chelahood was the knowledge that there were individuals who had succeeded. Chelas are not flashy people. They do not advertise their spirituality. The way you might know one is through his or her works, though even that is not an iron-clad certainty.[2]

Mother Teresa of Calcutta was undoubtedly a chela-unaware.

What does that mean?

It is not at all uncommon for a chela to move into a testing life in which the unvarnished qualities of the individual's Being are tested. When this happens, the chela is not aware of his or her link to the Brotherhood, the chela is only aware of his or her surroundings and the situations that he

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[1] In referring to those inner battles, one of the Brothers once said of mine that they had been "bloody."

[2] I doubt that I have to mention this, but in the off-chance it isn't evident, there are plenty of people out there who are compartmentalized in the sense that they do good works in one area of their life but are woefully underdeveloped in other areas. Chelas comprise an almost non-existent percentage of 'the good people" out there in the world. Put a little differently, chelahood is not solely about being a good person with good thoughts willing to do good things. It's also about being at a point in your spiritual evolution where you don't have a serious herd of accumulated karmic knots (from actions over past lives and this one, too) in need of your attention. If you are so encumbered, treading the chela path is not something karma will allow you to do no matter how nice a person you are on the surface. That doesn't mean you should not strive to be a good person. It just means there is more going on with the mechanics of the making of a *chela* than meets the eye.

or she has to deal with.[3]

Mother Teresa was a Being who was born into Catholic society. Within the context of her life, she believed as a Christian. She held the Pope to be the final authority on spiritual matters. She was a good, obedient nun.

Yet by her actions, she was different. This would have been a very benevolent Being whether she had been cast into the body of a Muslim or Hindu or Protestant, or into the world as an atheistic scientist.[4]

Being a chela has nothing to do with the culture you are born into, or the religion you work through, or your position in life. What matters is the quality of the Being. It is the tone of compassion that resonates within the self. It is the determination of the Being to act on behalf of the whole of life. It is the steely-eyed power behind the gaze.

If you could see the aura of a chela or Master, you would see colors and sense harmonies that would completely captivate. In their natural, unveiled state, the workers within the Brotherhood are to die for. Yet you could be standing in an elevator next to an actively aware chela and never know it because that Being would not allow him or her self to be so recog-

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[3] Just recently, letters written by Mother Teresa have shown that she was terribly conflicted in the sense that she felt that God had abandoned her—she simply did not feel Its presence after the first few weeks of the start of her work. She nevertheless persevered. It is not uncommon for a chela to be given a task, then cut adrift to do the best he or she can without any outward connection to the Brothers or "God." It is a severe test, but it makes evident for the Self the true quality and development of one's child-self Being.

[4] Saying a little more: The Brothers didn't say a lot about the state of the *chela unaware*, but I gathered that these testing times happened periodically for chelas, most often with lives that do not bring the chela to the attention of the world. There does come a time, though, and I don't know how often this happens but apparently it does happen, when the full force of the accumulated knowledge and bearing and achievement of the Being is allowed to surface, and you end up with someone who the world sooner or later acknowledges as being remarkable (again, think Mother Teresa).

It is June of 2021 and I just happened upon a transcript of a meeting that happened June, 1968. The Greek Master who spoke said, "I was thinking, not long ago, about the work of one of our chelas unaware, who was in that life called William Blake, and he said, 'Why do you stand around trembling, praying to God? Look within yourself where God dwells and take action from it.' "

I only distantly remember William Blake's name from school, so I Googled him. Living from 1757 to 1827, he was "an English poet, painter and printmaker." The entry goes on to say, "Largely unrecognized during his lifetime, Blake is now considered a seminal figure in the history of the poetry and visual arts of the Romantic age. His visual artistry led 21st century critic Jonathan Jones to proclaim him 'far and away the greatest artist Britain has ever produced.' In 2002, Blake was placed at 38 in the BBC poll of the 100 Greatest Britons."

Remember, though, that just as every prince is a man but every man not a prince, such a parallel is the case with *chelas unaware* and brilliant humans.

nized. Drawing attention to one's self is not generally a part of the chela life.

Still, we in the group had the rare opportunity to get to know several chelas. Whenever someone in the group asked Kay if they could talk to the Brothers, she would project her mind toward the Brotherhood and a chela would come. The chela would usually say that the requested Teacher was not able to come immediately, but that he or she would be available shortly. The chela would then, often, talk to us while we waited. It was during these waiting times that we had the chance to get to know some of these people and their own, personal stories.

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[A boy in China . . .]

My all-time personal favorite story was from a man who was, according to the chela himself, very, very old.[5] He was Chinese and had lived in China all his life. When he was young, his father had been a merchant who ran a small stall in the marketplace of his home village, and at times the boy would be charged with watching the stall while his father was away.

One day when the boy was alone at the stall, an old, miserable, deformed beggar approached the stall and loudly demanded money for food. The boy abruptly said *no* and sent the old fellow away.

The next day, the beggar appeared again and again made quite a fuss. He was again refused, but it got the boy thinking. Here he was (*he* being the boy) with all his prospects and an allowance and a comfortable home, and there was this old man, living on the streets with little to eat. The boy decided that if the beggar came back the next day, he would give him his monthly allowance in whole.

Sure enough, the beggar arrived the next day. When he presented himself, the boy gave him his monthly allowance saying *you can use this better than I*. With that, the beggar's countenance changed completely. He straightened up and, as he did, seemed to throw off years. With intention, he looked the boy in the eye and said, "You had the courage to do this thing, do you have the courage to follow me?"

With that, the fellow turned and walked away with the step of a young man.

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[5] When we first talked to him, he described himself in his aged condition as being "like a pile of dried leaves, ready to be blown away by the wind."

The boy, who was manning his father's stall by himself at the time, was bowled over by the force of this man who had just challenged him. Leaving the stand completely unattended, he followed the man to a temple on the outskirts of town. The man hadn't looked back once during the walk, but when they got to the temple he turned. Seeing that the boy had followed, he said *good*, then told the boy that there was someone inside the temple waiting to talk to him.

The boy, it seems, had been an accepted chela for many lifetimes. His Master was the man waiting inside the temple. The boy went in, met his Teacher and was told about his past and his karmic connection to the Brotherhood. That was the beginning of his work in this lifetime. He told us that he had since walked the breadth of China three times.[6]

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[A young woman in Egypt . . .]

There was another chela, a woman in Egypt, whose parents were traditionalist Muslims. When she was younger, she had outraged her father by refusing to marry an older man she barely knew. She knew in her heart that there was something more for her to do in life than to take the normal path. She left her home and got a temporary job in Cairo as a telephone operator. Her family disinherited her and would have nothing more to do with her.

She had always felt that there would be someone who would come to her and show her another way, but that person never seemed to come. So one day in despair, feeling that she had to do something to make things happen, she walked out past the pyramids with the intention of continuing to walk until someone came. It was a completely irrational thing to do by normal standards, but sure enough, two hours into her walk, a man ap-

6 As I was remembering and writing this, I got to thinking about how large China is and how hard that was to believe, so I checked (not that I would second guess a chela, but like I said, I have never suspended my willingness to question even though I've never come up with anything that has made me suspicious of the Brothers or their people). China is, according to the almighty Google search engine, approximately 5000 kilometers in breadth. If the man walked every day for 60 years (my feeling was that he was well beyond his eighties when we talked to him, so that assumption is probably an underestinate), I calculated that he would have had to have walked only .7 kilometers per day to accomplish the feat. As I put my calculator down, I felt a bit sheepish, but at least I knew I wasn't quoting an accomplishment that was literally impossible.

peared coming the other way. It was one of the Teachers. He told her who she was and what relationship she had with the Brotherhood, and her life changed from that day on.[7]

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[The leper . . .]

I remember another chela who talked to us briefly. He had contracted leprosy, not exactly on purpose, but it had come to him in life. He was, as we spoke, working in a leper colony as a leper. This was a very loving man who was working with very desperate people . . . which is what chelas often do.

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[The social workers . . .]

There was another instance when a man came who was a social worker in India. He didn't tell us his beginning, but he did say that he had come into contact with another chela he had a deep karmic connection with, and that the two had married. They had made love once with the intention of creating a body, which they succeeded in doing, for the use of a chela on the other side who was very highly evolved and needed a pure vehicle. After that one love-making experience and the birth of their child, they spent the rest of their lives living as brother and sister.

Later that year, we also had the chance to talk to her. She was also a social worker. The two were very kind and very loving toward each other and their child who was just four years old when we "met" them.

She told us a few stories about the child. One was quite sweat. She said that her husband enjoyed working out in the garden on weekends.

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[7] Again, I can just imagine a slew of people reading this, thinking to themselves that, "Gee, I'm a spiritual person," and having them walk into the San Gabriel Mountains without food or water expecting that someone would show up and anoint them a chela. Remember, the Brothers have said that they are fortunate if they find ONE NEW CHELA *every hundred years*. These Beings are very few and far between. The chances that you are one, no matter how nice and how spiritually devotional a person you are, are slim. If you feel that you should be leading a chela's life, though, lead the life of purity you would be expected to lead if you *were* a chela. Just don't do it with the expectation that you are going to get some kind of contact with the Brothers as a consequence. As always, motivation is everything.

One Sunday, a friend arrived wanting to talk to her husband. The man entered the house to find the child sitting in the living room playing. The man asked the boy where his father was. The boy rather sincerely replied, "Outside, playing with God."

From what they said, it sounded as though this child would grow up to be a very interesting person.

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[The Tibetan . . .]

There was a chela who was Tibetan who came fairly often, and there was one very kindly Egyptian chela who was a doctor from an affluent family. He had given his inheritance away to the poor when young and was manning a small clinic in a village close to Luxor when we came into contact with him (this was, interestingly, where the woman who had "walked out beyond the pyramids" was located when we knew her—she worked in his clinic). He was, according to the Brothers, apparently very close to Buddhahood. He stopped coming toward the end of our time with the Brothers, presumably because he was making preparations for the efforts that would take him there.

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[Chelas in history . . .]

On a little different note, it is not unusual for a very high chela to live a life that is somewhat public before coming into the enlightenment of a Master. Obviously, every "great" public figure is not a Master waiting to happen, but this does seem to be characteristic of those who *have* moved in that direction. One such individual was evidently the man history knew as Pythagoras.

I remember several years ago Carl Sagan moderating the TV show *Cosmos*. During one of the episodes, he referred to Pythagoras as being *a wigged-out mystic*. He then added derision by saying that Pythagoras wouldn't allow people to eat beans at his school at Crotona, and that he was very secretive about his knowledge and the knowledge that the Pythagoreans had accumulated in the world of music and science.[8]

[8] Sagan was doing this to laud modern Western science's propensity to share scientific

When I heard Sagan make his comment about the Pythagoreans and secrecy, the adage, *better to keep one's mouth shut and be thought a fool than to open one's mouth and remove all doubt* popped into my head. Crotona was a place very much like a Mystery School.[9] Pythagoras probably didn't ban beans, but it wouldn't have been surprising to find that people didn't eat them there. Beans have a vibratory rate that is very heavy. In fact, it is, in a subtle way, similar to the tone around red meat. Taken into the body as food, that kind of heaviness makes moving into extremely subtle, meditative states difficult. As there were in that place individuals who were very highly evolved in a spiritual sense—chela types—eating beans would not seem a natural thing to do.

As for the secrecy, again, this was like a Mystery School. Secrecy was all important because the Teachers there knew that knowledge given to those who had *not* developed within themselves a relatively pure motivation could only end in karmic disaster for both the student and the Teacher.

I'm talking about this because at some point in time while talking to the Master who had been Pythagoras (it was, in fact, K.H.), the life of Pythagoras came up. As the discussion expanded, he (K.H.) was asked what kind of life he had had *after* being Pythagoras. His answer was surprising. He said he was a woman slave in a Roman household. In that situation, her primary responsibility was to entertain her owner's guests (we weren't so indelicate as to ask what that entailed). When someone asked why he had come into such an awful situation, KH replied, "Because I had to learn to dance in chains."

The life of a chela is not always what one might expect of a spiritually evolved Being. That, unless you remember that learning how to deal with *existence in matter* means learning how to deal with all levels of existence

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knowledge. Of course, he didn't bother to mention that when it comes to scientific research that involves patents, scientists today can be as secretive as the CIA. He also obviously knew nothing about why a spiritual Teacher might keep dynamic knowledge out of the hands of individuals who hadn't the moral and ethical strength to use the knowledge with wisdom and for the whole of life. Sagan was a typical twentieth century man. Pythagoras had the distinction of not carrying that cross.

9 In re-reading this chapter, it dawned on me that very few of the readers would probably know much about the Mystery Schools of ancient times. This is not a plug, but I talk about them in Chapter 12 of the E.Phil book (*Eastern Philosophy for Western Minds; A Search for the Jewel in the Lotus*). I mentioned this book in the last chapter. The chapter that talks about the Mystery School is titled *Yoga I*. Oh, and the Mystery Schools in ancient, ancient times, according to the Brothers, were not at all as modern historians have pictured them.

in matter, at which time nothing should really surprise you.

(As I'm talking about "famous" people, there is another character the Brothers once talked about who was decidedly NOT a chela, but whose story was interesting.

Most people know that Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) was a Greek military genius who conquered most of the then known world all the way into the middle of India. What the Brothers told us, and what people obviously don't know, is that in his next life he was born into an American Indian tribe that had a very deep tradition of peacefulness.

That Being brought in with him all of the skandas (tendencies) he had developed in his previous life as Alexander. So as a young boy, he tried to convince his people that they should spread their influence in the area by attacking and conquering their neighbors, all of whom were also peaceful. The tribe elders thought the boy was insane, so to keep him from harming himself and others they put him in a fortified, guarded enclosure where he spent the rest of his life in relative solitude.

Isn't it interesting that we honor "greatness" in a man or woman, or in ourselves, without ever considering where that greatness might lead the individual the next time around.)

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[Blavasky and Sinnett . . .]

Back at the ranch: Blavasky, of course, had regular contacts with the Brothers. Then, again, she was a high chela with a very public duty to do. During the period she did her work, there were a few non-chelas who had indirect contact.

Alfred Percy Sinnett, the publisher of the largest English newspaper in India in the late 1800's, was able to gain access to the Brothers through Blavasky, but only via letters.[10] One of the things Sinnett continuously

[10] One of the more titillating bits of Theosophic lore is connected to these letters. (The letters are supposedly stored in the basement of the British National Museum in London.) If the story is correct, at least a few of those letters physically materialized in front of Sinnett, apparently out of thin air. What is interesting is that if you look at the alphabetic letters in those missives under a magnifying glass, you find that they are not made up of striated ink lines as would be the case if a pen had been used to do the writing. Rather, the letters are made up of thousands and thousands of tiny dots, much like those found in stippled portraits. This is, to say the least, odd. It is a reasonable way to create lettering, though, if

requested was to have personal contact with, if not one of the Masters, at least an Indian chela (Blavasky was Russian).

One day, an Indian who was (as the Brothers said) able to go very deeply into the inner worlds and was very powerful in that respect,[11] was sent by his Teacher and knocked on the door of Sinnet's home. Unfortunately, as the chela was generally concerned with more important things, he was not particularly careful about his appearance and looked quite disheveled in his natural state. Sinnett, being an Englishman, opened the door, saw this man who appeared on the surface to be a beggar, and peremptorily shut the door in his face.

The next time Sinnett wrote asking for contact, having no idea who he had slammed the door on, the Master responded rather dryly pointing out that, "The next time I send you one of my chelas, I will be sure he has a clean handkerchief in his pocket."

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one were thinking them into existence.

In looking through my note (as of 2019), I found this paragraph I'd written earlier that mentioned Sinnett and Blavasky and had to do with the materializations. I may have inserted it somewhere in the book, but because I can't find it, I'm assuming I didn't and am putting it here because it's kind of fun. It read: "The idea that a trained mind can clothe a thought in matter is not new (the loaves and fishes; water to wine, etc.), though the examples you get in the western world are used primarily to confer divinity upon Christ. The east doesn't see this kind of thing as being all that amazing. The materializing of some of Sinnett's letters out of thin air right in front of him is pretty wild, but something equally *out there* happened to Blavasky early on in her association with the Brothers (...I don't remember if the Brothers told us about this or I read it in a biography of Blavasky).

When Blavasky was just starting out, she was allowed access by the Brothers to information that was not generally shared even with chelas. To safeguard both her and the information, the Brothers evidently took control of one of her auric sheaths (we'll talk about the aura later). I don't know how this was done or, really, why, but apparently it happened. During that period, she was told she should never be without light around her. That meant that at night when she was asleep, she was expected to have a lamp lit in her room. A few weeks after this situation was instituted, she was apparently having trouble sleeping, so she turned the lamp down very, very low. She drifted off, then woke up a few minutes later to find the lamp blazing back up at its normal intensity. Odd, she thought. She turned it down again and slipped back into sleep. When she awoke later in the night, the lamp was back up to full brightness. Curiosity peeked, she turned it down one more time. But this time, instead of going back to sleep, she watched. Within a few short minutes, a hand materialized out of nowhere, turned the nob on the lamp bringing it back up to full brilliance, then disappeared. There was evidently a chela assigned to watch over her, and when the lamp dimmed, he/she simply materialized a hand—*thinking it into existence*—to turn the lamp back up again to where it was supposed to be. How's that for service . . . "

[11] This is what the Brothers told us through Kay.

[Testing . . .]

Even if you were fortunate enough to have a chela sent by his Master to meet with you, the meeting would usually be foreshadowed by a test you may well not pass. If you did fail, no contact would be made.

Both the story of the Chinese boy and the story of Sinnett testifies to this, but there are other examples that are, for me, closer to home. When Kay first started the public, bi-weekly meetings, there was a relatively wealthy banker and his wife who were good people and who had supported Zan and Kay and the Try Organization, and who very much wanted to have some kind of contact with someone "from the Brotherhood." They intended to go to India for reasons I don't remember, and they asked the Brothers through Kay if it might be possible for them to meet someone. The Brothers said *maybe*.

When the couple arrived in Delhi, the man went to the exchange window to change his dollars into rupees. Unfortunately, he didn't like the exchange rate, accused the clerk of dishonest practices and went into a rage.

The banker didn't find this out until later, but at the time a chela was standing right behind him in line. The banker was being tested by life, and he failed. As a consequence, the chela was not allowed to make the contact.

Coming into contact with a chela is not something karma allows easily. So why would the Brothers have this testing rule? Quite simply, for the Brothers to send a chela to meet someone, that someone would have to have done a considerable amount of work on behalf of the whole of life. It would also have to be karmically correct for the meeting to take place.

Neither requirement is something one can achieve on the spur of the moment. Both are earned by honoring and animating an intensely, spiritually sane life, which includes keeping a tether on the self-involved side of one's personal-self.

In short—and this has nothing to do with elitism or ego or any of the vices that you or I might be prone to animate if we were calling the shots—contact can come only if one has earned it. (Remember, every bit of energy the Brotherhood extends gives the Dark side an equal amount.)

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[My own experiences . . .]

I had two probable contacts with chelas during my time with Kay (not including the possibility that Kay was, herself, a chela . . . something she denied vehemently). The first happened in Edinburgh, Scotland.

I had gone late in the day to a park outside one of the castles and was standing looking out toward the sea when a man walked up and stood looking out in the same direction a few feet away from me. I nodded to him and said *hi*. He said *hi* back.

After a few moments, he said in a wonderfully thick Irish brogue that he apologized for bothering me, but that he had a problem and was hoping that I might be able to help. It seemed his home was on one of the islands off the coast of Ireland, and that he was in Edinburgh on some kind of business. He had lost his wallet, had absolutely no money, and had no way of getting any money until he got home.

I asked him how much he needed. He said $40. I said OK, at which time he looked me straight in the eye and said, "You understand I will never see you again?"

I said *yes*.

"You also understand," he continued, "that I will have no way of ever repaying you?"

I again said *yes*.

He concluded with, "Rest assured, I will pass the kindness on to someone else in need somewhere along the line."

I didn't think much about what he was saying at the time, I just gave him the money.

Having done so, I spotted a beautiful rainbow and excused myself to go to my car to get my camera. On my way back to the rainbow sighting, another man approached me in obvious hopes of waylaying me. As I looked at this second man, I realized that it was the *same man*, but in different clothes.[12]

The man tried to start up a conversation, but because I recognized him I somewhat clouded over. His attempt to re-initiate contact irritated me. What flashed through my mind was that he had identified me as a soft touch, and now he was trying his hand at extracting even more money from me. I didn't say it, but as he started up I remember thinking, "Sorry, fellow, but I've already given money to your brother."

What I did say was, "I have to go to take my rainbow picture," and I scooted off. That was the last time I saw him . . . almost.

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[12] I don't know if he had simply turned his jacket inside out or what, but he definitely was dressed differently.

As I was walking down the main thoroughfare going back to my car, a nice car pulled up very slowly next to me and beeped. I looked over and saw the man behind the wheel of the car. He had rolled his window down and was craning to be sure I saw him. In fact, he waved at me in a rather exaggerated way—almost like he was trying to get my attention beyond the norm.

I clouded over even more. My thought was, "You son of a bitch. Not only did you take advantage of my good nature, now you're rubbing my nose in it by making sure I know that you are not so destitute that you are without a very nice car to get around in."

Because I have such a strong aversion to being taken advantage of, I glared at him, then snubbed him by turning away without returning the wave. With that, he drove on.

A nerve had been hit. I didn't like being made the fool. I was angry and very emotionally clouded. What was remarkable was that about thirty seconds after he drove on, all that emotion abated as though a wizard with a wand had said a few magic words and made my angry child-self calm to the state of a dozing puppy. And in the stillness that settled over me, what came screaming out at me was the fact that this had been a chela. As was usual, I had been tested before he could continue. I was willing to help out a stranger with no thought of return. That I had passed. But when it came time for my personal ego and feelings about being taken advantage of were tested, all that personal stuff came burbling up and I failed.

In the clarity of the moment, I accepted my missed opportunity by sending the man as benevolent a mental image as I could and projected gratitude for his very existence. It was remarkable, though. From my own very unexpected inner reaction, I know the man was a chela sent by his Teacher to meet with me.[13]

The other instance in which I believe I ran into a chela was in Benares, India. The first full day I was there, I was being driven through the middle of town in a bicycle rickshaw. A kid in his early teens came up on a bike on our left, sort of out of nowhere, and started up a conversation. This wasn't, in and of itself, unusual. People in India are always interested in making contact with foreigners. Still, I managed to run into the kid, on and

[13] My mood changed lightning fast, and my moods NEVER change lightning fast. What I realized in writing about this was that my passing that first test allowed the chela to project energy at me to calm me after the fact. In doing so, he let me know he was there. If I hadn't passed that first test, I don't believe that would have been possible.

off, the entire time I was there. At one point he even took me to his father's rug shop where I had to tell his father that I wasn't there to buy anything but was there only because I was being polite to the kid.[14]

At the end of my stay, I was supposed to leave early the next morning. I had gone out for a walk, and walking back toward my hotel through an open field I found him hanging around, waiting for me.

What was surprising was that he told me pointedly and with a certain amount of urgency that he wanted something of mine. He didn't care what it was just as long as it was some personal thing.

I realized at the time that this *wasn't* a usual request, but I really didn't have anything I could give him. I had brought as little as possible on the trip, and everything I had I needed.

He didn't exactly become frantic when I said I didn't have anything I could give him, but it was obvious that this was very important to him. I didn't know why, so I gave him the best I had to offer which was, I'm embarrassed to say, nothing more than a blessing. I actually tapped him on the forehead when I gave it. (This, it dawned on me later, was an amazingly arrogant thing to do . . . as if I was such an especially evolved person spiritually that a blessing would have any special force to it . . . what a foolish little being my child-self sometimes is.)

After he left empty handed, I thought about his urgency and the fact that it really didn't matter what the item was so long as it be mine, and in relatively short order it dawned on me.

When a chela is directed to make contact with someone, there is always a certain amount of meditative preparation on the part of the chela. And often, there is a meditative effort—a projecting of energy if you will—that follows the interaction.

If this kid was a young chela, and if he had been "assigned" to me, so to speak, it would make sense that part of his assignment would be to meditate at me after the fact. One of the easiest ways to hold a meditative contact with someone is to have some personal possession of theirs. In short, I think his desire to have something of mine was the consequence of his need to continue to project thought and energy toward me even after I departed. Having something of mine would have made that process easier.

Unfortunately, by the time this dawned on me, he was gone and that was that.

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[14] I was given tea and treated cordially, anyway.

[The group . . .]

As for other people in our group having interactions with someone from the Brotherhood proper, Kay's experience with seeing KH in the car in India was the only situation in which someone actually saw one of the Master, albeit at a distance.

As for contact with chelas, I believe there was some of that also, though nobody handed anyone a card with CHELA imprinted on it. Kay's experience in India with the man who could do amazing things with his mind, and who, upon leaving, said, "You've come from the West to meet the men on the mountain," surely that man was a chela.

Kay and Cathy had an encounter in Egypt with a cab driver who was very special in his quality. He dropped several veiled hints that *this was a contact*, just to let them know that they were not alone. Nobody came out and actually said anything overtly, but both Kay and Cathy were pretty much convinced that this man was from the Brotherhood.

And Kay, Cathy, and Brian met a man at the pyramid complex at Saqqara outside Cairo that was quite remarkable in his demeanor.

That, at least as best I can remember, more or less rounds out the contact experiences that I know of concerning myself and the people in my group. There could have been more, but that is all I'm aware of . . . except, we all could have been having more contact than we realized.

Kay could be cantankerous because she was strong willed, but she was a very benevolent soul and she had been selected by the Brothers to be the center-point of our gathered group. I asked her one night if, in light of her contact with the Brothers, she was a chela. She said *no*, but I noticed that her eyes kind of teared up. I suspect she was or, if not, that she was very close. It was a stupid question to ask, though. The link between a chela and his/her Master is very personal. It is not something one bandies about.[15]

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[15] This has nothing to do with being a chela, it has to do with Kay as a person. I mentioned above that she was a very benevolent soul. Let me expand with an example.

I remember having tea with her and some of her friends before our group really formed. We were all sitting around the table, talking, and when everyone was ready I volunteered to go into the kitchen and get the teacups and saucers. Always the clown, I proceeded to stack, maybe, five cup/saucer units, one on top of the other, with one hand holding the bottom saucer and the other covering and steadying the top cup. As I came out into the dining room with this mound of porcelain between my hands, Kay looked up, saw what I had done, and said, "You drop that and you're dead." She had a huge grin on her face when she said it, but her words brought home how precariously perched everything was. In an

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[Kirk of Stone . . .]

There was one other experience, though, that was not a contact so much as a happening. Before I sign off for this chapter, I figure I should mention it.

Several years before I took my trip to Scotland, Rolf was talking through Kay during one of his impromptu after-dinner discussions with the group, and during the give and take he told us that he had lived in his Scottish life in a village near Glasgow. He also said he had been a piper, that he had died in the Battle of Culloden, and that he was buried at *kirk o stone*. Having said that, the conversation turned to other things.

Kirk o stone means "church of stone," so when I was planning the England/Scotland trip a few years later, I mentioned to Kay that I wanted to go to Glasgow for a day and, maybe, find where Rolf was buried. We both assumed the church was somewhere in the Glasgow area.

I arrived in Glasgow on a late Friday afternoon. It was just before closing time for the library, so I hurriedly went in to see if I could find a reference to a church named *kirk o stone*.

It was nowhere to be found.

Having failed to find Rolf's burial place, I continued on with my trip secure in the knowledge that *if* Rolf had lived where he said, and if he had died as he said, I would have no proof of either. It was a disappointment, but that was life.

What was interesting was that at the end of the trip as I was blowing down one of the highways that leads back to Edinburgh from the north, I ran across a freeway off-ramp sign that read, "Kirk of Stone."

Evidently, *Kirk o Stone* was not the name of a church, it was the name

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attempt to make sure I didn't make a mess of things, I applied more pressure to the top cup which, unfortunately, made the entire mass accordion out. There were broken cups and saucers everywhere.

Kay's response was akin to my response (at least internally) when one of my students does something truly stupid. She just smiled ever more broadly, said something to the effect of, "That was really dumb," and proceeded to help me clean up the mess.

I felt awful and vowed to get her replacements, but her reaction to what was a truly horrible thing was so kind. It was as though she understood that broken cups and saucers weren't worth animating anger, and that I was being dumb but not mean spirited.

She was, as I said, a very benevolent soul.

of a small town.

I turned off, found the town's church, and spend a good two hours walking amongst the church's cemetery tombstones, some of which dated back to the 1600's. Unfortunately, most of the writing on most of the tombstones had been scrubbed away by time and the elements.

Rolf's dust may have been there, but I didn't find it.

Still, I considered it a very cool gift to have stumbled upon the *kirk o stone* after I had lost all hope of ever doing so.

Chapter 13

Unevennesses

Aside from trying to do something useful, a large part of my life with the Brothers was about being inwardly observant. I realized early on that I would never understand other people if I didn't first understand myself. To that end, part of my life's task was to be attentive, to look carefully at my inner workings and to learn as much as I possibly could about my own child-self. I understood and took advantage of the fact that in every experience to which karma drew me, even when my emotional body went wild and my inner sight temporarily glazed over, there was always a jewel of wisdom at the heart of the experience that was accessible once all of the emotion died down. That reality was a very conscious part of my life.

During my twenty-something years with Kay, there were times when my sensitivity to what was going on *in my head* was heightened enormously. I remember, for instance, having a period of time when the motives underlying the motives upon which my thoughts were based became completely transparent and, as a consequence, glaringly obvious.

I remember my mind did this funny little jog one evening while I was doing the dishes at my mom's house in Newhall, and out of nowhere I became completely *one with the moment*.[1]

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[1] How to explain this? When I first began to surf, getting my feet in just the right position after popping upright was a problem. Having them just a tiny bit off-center meant I was sort-of stable, but not really. The first time I got it right, it was amazing. It was like standing on a broad sidewalk, completely balanced, completely solid, leaving me able to effortlessly maneuver the board in any way I might want.

The first time I tried to see where my thoughts came from, I noticed there was a tiny lag between when a thought would present itself and when it would go away leaving room for another to take its place. Actually getting to *in the moment* was like standing on a razor's edge with *before the moment* on one side and *after the moment* on the other side. What was remarkable was that when I became *one with the moment* that night, that razor's edge became that sidewalk where I was completely balanced, completely secure. I could see ever so clearly that if I had been able to stay in that state, there would be no need to plan ahead for anything. When it was time for something to happen, *in that moment* life would present

I remember having a period of time when I saw my dweller[2] in its entirety. The immensity of it was staggering—all the little selfishnesses that made it up. It was like counting the stars in a cool, summer, mountain night sky.

And there was the time when my child-self became completely quiet and still and for several days I had the opportunity to feel what it would be like to be totally aligned and in harmony with the highest in me.[3]

None of these experiences stayed with me for any length of time. It was more like a taste, just enough to let me know what was there.

And why did they come to me? In light of the path upon which life has nudged me, I suspect it was important for me to know that these things exist. What I do know for sure is that they happened, and they framed in me a very comfortable feeling about my place in the universe. I can remember hiking through the backcountry of Yosemite National Park above Tuolumne Meadows—a relatively wild place—and in that uninhabited wilderness feeling as though I was *indoors*. It wasn't an intellectual thing. It was a very real, gut level feeling.

Thinking about it later, what was going on became evident. "Outdoors" is what most people associate with *expanse*. It is where the unexplored places are. "Indoors" is known, it's enclosed space. For me at the time, "indoors" was how I felt being encased in the physical world—even when that physical world was in the wilderness. "Outdoors" was how I felt when I entered in meditation the expanse of the *inner worlds*.[4]

It was all clear to me, and it was a consequence of my dealings with Kay and the Brothers.

At this point in this book, especially given the last few chapters, my students should have a good idea as to why I appeared to them as I did (at least for those who found me moderately interesting). Unfortunately, there may still be adults out there who are completely baffled. Specifically, I'm thinking about those who have had the thrill of having to deal with my less

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the action needed and I would take it. It is hard to explain, but it was a very other-worldly experience and quite blissful . . .

[2] Remember, "the dweller" is the name the Brothers gave to *the lesser side of the child-self in its entirety*, accreted over all the lives one has lived and complete with all the protective mechanisms the self uses as it tries to control life for its own purposes.

[3] This happened after the group and I went to see the Dalai Lama during his first visit, literally, to Los Angeles. The experience is chronicled in the E.Phil book and will be revisited a few chapters down the line.

[4] What's bigger on the inside than on the outside? Answer: The mind . . .

enlightened side.

Odd, you think. Having read the last few chapters, especially the one that highlighted the Brothers' lessons, you might expect that my dark side would have been, if not non-existent, then at least under control. After all, there was power wrapped up in the Brothers' teachings. How could I *not* live an after-Kay life that was "spiritual," given the benevolence and wisdom I had been exposed to?

The fact is that after Kay died, life nudged me in a wholly unexpected way. Karma and I had issues. Normal people are uneven in a spiritual sense. I was no different.

So what were my unevennesses?

I had two areas of jaggedness that I brought in with me at birth, which were major and glaring.[5] The first had to do with my temper. The second had to do with my control or, more accurately, my lack of control over the sexual energies. Both outwardly tamped themselves down, more or less, while I was around Kay, the group, and the Brothers. But when Kay died and the group dispersed, the cyclic nature of life took over and I was faced once again with those same problems . . . just as though they had never really left.

In fact, the ferocity with which my temper and my sexual side returned after Kay's death was a testament to what the Brothers had said all along. Thought-forms and karmic situations that are not attended to in the here and now may appear to lose their punch with time, assuming we aren't talking about hard core addictions, but they don't just go away for good. They stay attached to you. They may hide beneath the surface in the subconscious—they may go to sleep, so to speak—but at some time in the future they will re-animate and you will have to pick up and deal with them at exactly the point where you left off the last time around.[6]

As there may be people reading this with whom I had contact at an

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[5] The Sanskrit word for such karmic tendencies is *skandas*.

[6] Minor note: Several chapters ago, I said Rolf had told me three stories that had made an impact on me. Actually, the second "story" was no more than a few sentences. He told us that we should work very hard to shed the grosser, heavier thought-forms we might be tempted to attach ourselves to—or that we had already made a part of our thinking—because when we stepped across the line, they would stick to us like glue. The consequence would be that we would have to drag them around with ourselves as we moved in the inner levels. When Kay died and I started to move in my own sphere, I realized in a very personal way that my anger and the sexual side were still there, stuck like glue. Once again, Rolf was spot on, though I didn't realize how spot on until I had had enough experience in life to see it.

adult level,[7] I am including this chapter as a quick and dirty explanation of why I have done some of the things I have done.

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[First, my temper.]

I have found from experience that when I become angry about something, it is either because I am not seeing the situation clearly or because I have run into a situation in which some not-so-good aspect of myself is being animated and/or reflected back at me by life.

Examples of the latter are easy: It could be my anger at the hammer that misses a nail and hits my thumb. That experience has, on occasion, animated my complete disregard for the fact that the hammer is simply doing its duty as all inanimate objects do, and my tendency to place blame where it doesn't belong—which is to say, *anywhere but on me*.

It could be my anger at the guy who cuts me off on the freeway. That experience has, on occasion, reflected back at me the fact that I, myself, have on occasion been more than willing to put other people's lives in jeopardy on the freeway (or anyplace else) if I happen to be in a hurry and, as a consequence, have darted in and out of traffic at high speed (possibly to make up for time lost due to poor time management) to get where I thought I needed to be.

It could be my anger when I am in a hurry in a car and get hung up at a long stoplight. That experience has, on occasion, animated my belief that the world should revolve around me, that people going the other way should come *after* my needs are satisfied and, most important, by animating my unwillingness to allow life to flow at a pace that is appropriate for the needs of all involved.

As tempting as it always is to find fault with *the other guy* (or *thing*), there is usually something going on with *me* when my temper comes into play.[8]

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[7] That is not to say that I treated my students as anything *but* adults, it is just to say that I have tended to be gentler with my students than I am with my peers (though my students may find that hard to believe).

[8] I can imagine someone thinking, "Hell's bells, I'm angry at the things Hitler did. Surely there is nothing wrong with *that*!" That observation misses the point entirely. The kind of thing I'm talking about here is not superficially linear. Trust me. If you are feeling anger, there is a very good chance that it has more to do with the way *you* are dealing with life than it does with the object of your irritation. This, I might add, is certainly *not* something I

There is no experience that doesn't have within itself some pearl of wisdom buried at its center. Coming to extract that bit of wisdom is not always easy, but it is always possible. No matter how irritating some situation is, either personally or professionally, when I finally calm down enough to look and see what there is for me in the experience that will help me see myself or life or others more clearly—the *moment* I seize upon that true pearl of wisdom, the experience changes and the anger simply evaporates.

A single, fairly intense example of *both* anger-causing circumstances happened at Poly in the year 2003. I'll give the situation as it appeared to me in my rather foggy state of existence at the time, then talk about what I think was really happening. Here goes.

Due to a series of administrative moves, the science department was put in the enviable position of having to create an entirely new, year-long, ninth grade curriculum out of a program that had originally span only one semester. You would think such an opportunity would have been a joy to negotiate. In fact, it was a nightmare.

We initially wanted to have two options, a biology class for the less able kids and a chemistry class for the students who wanted to take AP chemistry in the sophomore year.[9]

This was the most reasonable course to take. There was a very big need for a first year chemistry class before the AP chem course because the AP course as presented at the time was truly the proverbial *class from hell*. Students were doing *three to four hours of homework per night* to cover everything the teacher felt had to be covered. What's more, because the teacher so cared about her kids, she was in a constant state of guilt and anguish over this.

Cutting the workload in the chemistry AP class by having those students take a regular chem class first as frosh was not only reasonable, it was the humane thing to do (at least in my opinion).[10]

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would suggest to a Holocaust survivor. It is something, though, that I have found has pretty much always been true for me in my own life.

[9] For those of you who don't know, an "AP class" is a college level course given in high school from which students can get college credit if they pass the Advanced Placement test in that field, assuming their *college of choice* accepts AP scores. All AP science courses claim to be two-year programs. In fact, in my opinion, chemistry is the only one of the sciences that really *needs* two years even if you have bright kids. We do it in one.

[10] Just so you know, the department's policy at the time was to let our best students take

Unfortunately, the administration nixed the *two-choice* possibility because they didn't want to have to deal with student selection—who should be let into which course—and, more to the point, because they didn't want to have to deal with the overly ambitious parents of our less-able students, some of whom would inevitably try to force their kid into the more advanced program (at least, that, I think, was the fear).[11]

With the most academically reasonable solution eliminated, the department had to come up with a second-best choice. I argued that it was insane to make 15 to 16-year-old sophomores deal with a two year, college level chemistry course *in one year*, so at the end of the 2002/2003 school year, I got people in the department to agree to help the AP chem program out by putting a chemistry course into the freshman year.[12]

The chemistry teachers at the time didn't like the idea. They maintained that a lot of freshmen would have trouble handling a chem course in the freshman year unless the course was watered down considerably—a point that was well taken and probably true—and I suspect that they were not overly fond of the idea that the regular chemistry class at Poly *be* watered down. Also, as nice a person as she was, the AP teacher had at the time a somewhat proprietary notion about not wanting students to learn any chemistry until they got to her in the AP course.[13]

The bottom line was that at the end of the 2002/2003 school year, people agreed to go with a chemistry course for the frosh . . . or so I thought.

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the most advanced course offered in each of the science disciplines. That meant AP Physics would happen in the senior year because Calculus was necessary for that course; AP Biology would happen in the junior year because its prerequisite was a chemistry class; AP Chem would end up in the sophomore year because that was the only place it *could* happen.

[11] In fact, the *official* reason for rejection was that it wasn't fair to late bloomers to make them take biology as freshmen, thus eliminating any possibility of their taking AP Chemistry later on. What the administration was saying, though I doubt they would have copped to it at the time, was, *we don't want to make life difficult for our two or three late bloomers each year, so we will follow a policy that essentially screws the twenty or so kids that <u>are</u> ready to take AP chem as sophomores*. It was sketchy logic, but that is what happens when people don't want to admit the real reason they are motivated to do something (though to be honest, *I* wouldn't want to face a Poly parent, as rare as this would probably be and as nice as Poly parents are as a whole, who was trying to force his or her not-so-bright kid into the AP track).

[12] Interestingly, when Mab Voekel, a chemistry teacher, had been put in charge of the semester-long ninth-grade program back in the day, she saw no problem making the class into a pre-chemistry course.

[13] I can just imagine her reading this and being tweaked, but there were a couple of times over the earlier years I knew her when she actually said just that. She has mellowed since.

[Major note: I don't mean to appear to be ragging on either of the teachers I'm about to discuss. Having said that, to be able to draw observations about myself, I need to present events *as I saw them at the time*. That may make what follows seem blunt. Please do not conclude from any of this that I dislike either teacher, or that I hold a grudge against either, or that I in any way wish them ill. What happened, happened. I'm recounting it here because there is a moral to the story that can't be had without an understanding of the circumstance, again, *as I saw them at the time*. That's all.]

Over the summer, the department head—a woman who just happened to be a chemistry teacher—used her position to reverse that decision. She had gone to a "physics first" seminar and had decided that the freshman program should be oriented around physics. *There were some good reasons to do this*, but I was adamantly against the move because it would *not* serve to lessen the load on our sophomores AP chem students, even if some of the physics was aimed at chemistry-related topics. (Secondarily, it would also substantially mess up what I was doing in the way of physics with the seniors.[14])

You might wonder how I reacted when I found out about this turnaround. In a word, I was *furious*.

Just before school started at the beginning of the 2003/2004 school year, there was a huge departmental meeting to discuss the change of affairs. After two hours of emotional, heated debate, one of the middle school teachers finally said, "Look, you have a year to fill; one faction wants physics, one faction wants chemistry. Why not make the first semester physics and the second semester chemistry."

I said I would be happy with that if the physics being taught was phys-

[14] It was frustrating and a little irritating that the chemistry folks weren't willing to accept my sincere concern for the sophomores taking AP chemistry (and as a consequence weren't willing to take my thoughts seriously). Still, it shouldn't have been surprising. People aren't used to dealing with individuals who aren't being driven by ulterior, self-motivated thinking, and I certainly appeared to have such thoughts (worry that the population in senior physics would drop from 90% to 60% if a Physics First program was installed in the frosh year would certainly qualify). The problem was that that wasn't where I was coming from. My training with the Brothers was to serve the whole without thought of self. I wasn't doing it consciously, and I didn't always succeed as I muddled through life, but in this case my main motivation *was* to help out someone other than myself—the beleaguered, sophomore chem students in this case. That really was my main focus.

ics that was applicable to and supportive of chemistry. Everyone nodded his or her approval. We had found a compromise with which all could live.

During the school year, the department jumped through all the hoops it had to jump through to get the new course approved by the school. I wasn't a part of any of this as I had done what I considered to be my part, which was to get a compromise that didn't screw the sophomore chem students. A week *after* the final approval came, I was told that, *oh, by the way, we had to change the curriculum of the freshman course to get it approved. The new curriculum? We will be doing a full year of PHYSICS.*

You might wonder how I reacted when I found out about *this* turn of events. In a word, I was *furious*.

[Author's Note: I should inject here that on the surface, you would think that this seemingly self-serving move on the part of the chemistry-teacher/department-chair was what made me so angry, but in looking back I can imagine a world in which my self was in such a state of spiritual balance and equanimity that my reaction would have been completely different. I'd have said, "If you feel that strongly about having physics in the freshman year, OK. I think we're missing out on a big opportunity, but let's see how it plays out your way."

That wasn't how I reacted, though. It wasn't obvious at the time, but my reaction was really motivated by something that *would have happened anyway* (I'll get to that *something* shortly) and would have upset my inner self whether I'd gotten my way with the freshmen physics/chemistry split or not. The department head's actions just gave my personal-self license to be incensed about things, and it took the opportunity in spades. This is part of why this is all so educational.

So on with the story.]

Deceitful, lying, underhanded, backstabbing—these were all adjectives I attributed to the one person in the department who, it would seem, was in a position to do whatever she damn well please—our department head. I had signed off on the "final" proposal thinking that I was putting my name to the compromise everyone had agreed upon at the beginning of the school year. It never crossed my mind that our department head would make a switch after-the-fact.

My public reaction was to let fly with a slew of very angry, very emotional, very R-rated emails (all of which she forwarded on to our school head and, I suspect, were put in my folder as evidence of my non-collegi-

ality, my disrespectfulness toward colleagues and my unprofessionalism).

Of course, the department head had *a legitimate reason* for doing what she did, though I didn't know it at the time. As I was told much later, the University of California wouldn't give high school credit to any course that lumped two disciplines into one year. We *couldn't* do the compromise. She was evidently so traumatized by my anger at the initial reversal, though, she decided she'd just do what the UC system *would* accept, then claim that she didn't understand the original compromise *hadn't* meant a year of physics *that was devoted to chemistry related topics*.

Again, I hadn't figured any of this out at the time. All I knew was that a change had been made behind my back. And as far as I was concerned, my department head was responsible for pulling a pretty underhanded maneuver.

There was a period when I was so angry that I could hardly speak to or about her without invoking four letter words.

Which brings us back to *the path* and the why of all of this!

What I was experiencing was something that people all across the country experience every day. My child-self was ready to kill (figuratively, at least—certainly not literally) because it felt manipulated and betrayed, and because something it had mentally attached itself to—in this case, a desire to substantially lighten the AP Chemistry load on the sophomores—had not only been threatened, it had been completely trashed.

But was something else going on?

It took several months of teeth gnashing anger before I calmed down enough to look at the situation with some sense of clarity, and even then it wasn't until I started to write about this ten years later that I saw what had happening from a *big picture* perspective. The source of my fury had absolutely nothing to do with seemingly broken agreements or underhanded dealings. Its karmic origin had to do with something entirely different and much deeper.

I said this earlier, but way before I even knew about Poly, Rolf had said, "You need to mix up a brew inside yourself with such broad and disparate ingredients that you become interesting to all kinds of people, because you will be working with the young, and you will need to attract all kinds to you." That wasn't just wishful thinking. He could see the stream of my karmic path, and he knew that that path was going to take me to young minds that could benefit from what I had learned from the

Brothers.[15]

I had a deep karmic background working with thinking, young adults.[16] My presence at Poly was something that was karmically right and, I think, something the Brothers had hoped for. There were times when I was with my E.Phil people when I could *feel the presence of one of the Brothers around me* as I talked. It may not have been obvious to anyone beyond myself, but I was there at Poly for a reason.

And how was I to attract those young minds?

For twenty-six years, I was the only physics teacher at Polytechnic School. That meant that I was the single person in the science department who had almost daily contact with a majority of the seniors (remember, before the switch, 90% of Poly's students took physics in their senior year). Kids knew a little about me when they arrived in my physics classes—I had a reputation of sorts—but the more they saw of me as seniors, the more enigmatic I became.[17] In other words, it wasn't the wonderfulness of myself that was so attractive. No, it was more that I was very much *out of the ordinary*. And for many, they just had to know more.

This is partially why a good half of the senior class every year routinely took my Eastern Philosophy activity—a "course" for which they got no credit.[18] And much of it was predicated on seniors having classroom contact with me.

What I wasn't seeing during the great Freshman course debacle, partially because I was in the middle of the experience at the time and partially because I was in the middle of my *life* at the time, was that there are seasons to life and a flow to life, and change happens. I had, for over twenty years, held a tone around me that was intimately connected to the Brothers. I wasn't even consciously aware that it was there, but it was.[19]

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[15] This is not to say that karma is necessarily predestined. There were several points in my life when I could have made choices that would have palpably altered where I ended up. Nevertheless, each human has such an enormous backlog of experience that one's karmic impetus to move along a relatively set "life path" is huge. If one was sensitive and could "see" that path, as was the case with Rolf, it is not outside the realm of possibility that he might be able to say something intelligent about where I was most likely going to end up.

[16] I talked about that rather extraordinary life in ancient Greece back in Chapter 10.

[17] This was obviously not true of all students, but there were a fair number who fell into this bailiwick.

[18] Though to be fair and accurate, I'm sure there were kids who stumbled into the gatherings because they thought it would look good as an extra-curricular activity on a college application.

[19] After coming back from my trip to India in the late 1980's, Kay and I were sitting at the

And during that time, apparently, the Brothers' presence in my life was considerably more real and palpable on an energetic level than I realized.

I don't know when Kay began to recede from the Brothers. I do know she died in 1998, and I know that for at least a year or two before she died she was having trouble with at least the beginnings of dementia. You wouldn't think that an individual who had done the kind of work she was doing would have her life end like that, but you have to remember that everyone has their own, individual karma, and that the stresses of life don't just go away when you work for the Brothers. In fact, as I pointed out earlier, they actually magnify.

The point is that toward the end-time of her life, I began to notice that the weekly meetings didn't hold the energy they had when we began. I don't know if Kay was given free rein to wing it in those meetings, so to speak, or what, but they didn't have the same feel. The Brothers presence seemed to be receding, as it had to do (and would obviously have done in a definitive way when she died). So there was change there.[20]

But in looking back, it was also a time of change in other ways. Poly was getting bigger, which meant it needed to add teachers. So it was around that time that they finally hired another physics teacher to teach seniors along with me. That meant that I was no longer the only show in town on the senior front. It was as though there had been a window during which I had had complete, total access to the young, thinking minds that were our seniors, and during which I was able to be of service in the way

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dining room table waiting to talk to one of the Teachers and the chela who was waiting with us said something surprising. It seems he was walking through the university grounds of his home city (I think it was in Varanasi, called by the English Benares), when he spotted a foreigner "who had the energies of the Brothers around him." The foreigner was apparently me, and he just wanted to let me know that I had been noticed.

[20] I am continually fascinated by how karma works. The Brothers once pointed out that if, in a few moments, any one of us in the group were to somehow make the monumental leap of understanding that comes with complete enlightenment, the relationships we had with everyone around us would completely change. There would no longer be the necessity for the kinds of friction-generating give-and-take that happens when unenlightened individuals nudge (or in some cases, shove) their compatriots toward understanding through experience.

Kay had a very close karmic relationship with each of the members of our group. When it was time for us to go out on our own, it was karmically important that we become less dependent upon her and the Brothers. For that to happen, her influence on us had to recede. The Brothers once said that for the student to flourish, the teacher must die (if nowhere else than in the mind of the student). When it came time for us to be on our way in life, karma cleverly engineered that "dying" with Kay's slip into mild dementia.

of offering the E.Phil class. But in a very natural way, around the time of Kay's death, that window began to close.

So on the surface, my outrage over the curricular dispute was fueled by the seemingly deceitful actions of a department head, but deep down, my real upset—something that my child-self kept nicely hidden until months into the ordeal—was that in making the departmental change, dropping the number of students who took senior physics was effectively walling me away from access to the people I felt I was supposed to serve (this, completely missing the observable point that "things were changing anyway").[21]

This was not in any way uppermost on my mind as I was snarling and fuming at that poor department head. In fact, it was so completely covered over in my mind that it took several months and a considerable amount of meditating to see it. But once I saw to the heart of the situation, once I saw what there was there for me to see, the anger went poof and completely dissolved. I still didn't really trust my department head, but I was no long angry with her and I no longer held her responsible for what had happened.

Why? Because what I was seeing in the situation was *karma moving appropriately*.[22] And my angry response to the circumstance? It had come to flag my need to look more closely at what was there.

There is one other thing I probably should mention here that some of you may be wondering about. As that window was closing, if I had held to my inner disciplines, would karma have somehow rejiggered things to

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[21] In other words, even though it was NOT on my mind during the great debate, hidden deeply underneath the surface and completely out of sight of my rational mind *was* a fear of loss of seniors in senior physics. It just wasn't me being your normal, proprietary physics teacher as the chem teachers thought. It was me seeing the opportunity to be of service as spokesman for the ideas put forth by the Brothers slipping away.

[22] A little more about Poly's Freshman program: The final, final agreement was that the year of physics in the Freshman year would be laced with chemistry topics. As I expected, that was largely forgotten with time and we ended up teaching a relatively standard Physics-First physics class. The up-side was that we had extremely creative, talented teachers doing it, so the class itself was EXCELLENT—far and away better than anything I probably would have come up with. Additionally, with the new science program in general, we now had only around 60% of the seniors taking senior physics so we could offer alternate semester-long science courses for seniors that were really quite fine. Examples of these courses were "Forensics" and "Global Health Studies" and "Cosmology, Astronomy and Relativity" (that one was mine). In short, although I really didn't want to see the change happen back when it was happening, on the whole it was a good thing for both the school and the students.

allow me to continue serving my seniors as I had done in the past?

The answer is *probably not*.

When change comes, one doesn't suddenly become a different person. You can't have the kind of experience I had with the Brothers and not have it affect you profoundly and permanently. I still had a part of me that sat quietly and watched as the rest of me moved through life. I still had a part of me that was introspective, that looked at experience to see where the pearls of wisdom were to be found in happenings that were painful or frictional or even pleasurable. I still meditated. I still project blessing when I saw a need. I still acted on behalf of others even when there was nothing in it for me. And I suspect that if life and karma hadn't had reasons, really good reasons, for pulling me back into "normal" life (not the least of which being that the stream of young people who I was karmically meant to bring the thinking of the Brothers to was rather naturally drying up), life and karma would have helped me actively keep the mental, inner link with the Brothers and I'd have "kept my inner discipline."

It would have been enormously hard because I would have been outwardly alone—no Kay, no outward manifestations of the Brothers, no group—but that is the way a chela's life often is (and though I'm no chela, it could have gone down that way).

Truth be told, though, karma and life *had* really good reasons to pull me back into the stream of being "normal" (all of which you will be treated to shortly), so that's what it did. And the consequence was that although I still appeared to be the same guy on the outside, the tone that I carried around me was not the same. It wasn't bad. I was just no longer enigmatic.

Here is one example of a loud, cosmically amusing noise my childself made after Kay died, that will give you a feel for what I mean. It had to do with my car.

As of 2001, I owned a 1986 Honda Accord LX.[23] It had the penchant to do two interesting things when it rained. It leaked, and it would occasionally stall . . . usually while going *seventy miles-per-hour* on a wet, spray-filled freeway.

I had no intention of getting rid of the car—it got 34 miles to the gallon and, in its beat up form, was great for getting to obscure surf spots down rutted dirt roads. It was fifteen years old, though, and I finally de-

[23] In fact, I continued to own it up until 2011 when I noticed that when on the freeway, the direction in which my steering wheel was oriented was no longer linearly connected to the direction in which the car would travel. Very disconcerting!

cided I needed something that was more reliable. To remedy the problem, I bought a new Porsche Boxster.

I did this for several reasons above and beyond the reason I gave my students.[24] No matter, their reaction to the news was all over the map. Some thought it was very cool; some couldn't see me in anything so delicate;[25] some were thoroughly confused. That latter group tended to be my E.Phil kids.

How could someone who rode a bike to school every day, who had been a player of sorts in early life but had walked away from it all, who talked so knowledgeably about the Eastern philosophies and the spiritual life, buy a God damn, $45,000 Porsche? It just didn't make sense.[26]

In fact, it all had to do with things that were happening in my life of which they were not aware.[27]

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[That other unevenness . . .]

To understand the full story concerning the major change that happened after Kay died, we have to look at my other area of unevenness—that associated with the world of relationships, mating, dating and, dare I say, sex.[28] This will be taken up fully in the next few chapters, but before we go charging off into that area, there are a few preliminary things to be mentioned.

As I said in previous chapters, my first several years with Kay and the group were blissfully enlightening, if for no other reason than I had the

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[24] When asked, I told them I got it because I needed a car. Another reason, which I didn't give my students, was that given my penchant to drive as though I was road racing, I wanted a car that was designed to allow me to do just that safely. (Unfortunately, its agility and speed potential was partly to blame for the car finding itself in a six car pile-up on the freeway sixteen years later, but that's a whole other story . . .)

[25] At least a couple of kids thought I would better fit into *something that rumbled* like a Corvette.

[26] I should inject here that people don't do things that seem to them, at the time, to be irrational. That doesn't mean their actions *are* rational. It just means that at the time, they don't *seem* irrational. That was the case with the Porsche and me.

[27] . . . And it had nothing to do with a *second childhood* or a *mid-life crisis*, though I can't tell you how much enjoyment my students and colleagues derived from chivying me with that suggestion.

[28] Considering that controlling the sexual energies was my second bit of major jaggedness, wasn't that a clever transition?

opportunity to talk to the Brothers whenever I chose. I didn't make a pest of myself, but there were times when I would really try to get a handle on something, would fail and would need help.

It was during one of those sit-downs that I asked a question about relationships. Cathy had, through Kay, come into contact with someone on the other side with whom she had a very strong connection. I, naturally, wondered if there might not be someone in a female body that *I* was well tuned to that I might meet sometime in my life. It was more curiosity than anything else.

What the Teacher said was that, yes, there was someone I would meet who "was on my level," though I didn't know exactly what that meant, and that it would happen "later in life when I was fully established."

At the time, I was very focused on leading what I thought was a "spiritual" life, so I rather cavalierly said to all of this, "When I meet her, do I *have* to get together with her?"

It was a stupid, arrogant thing to ask. The Master, though, as they always seemed to do, ignored the ignorance and instead made something useful out of the opportunity. What he said was, "When the time comes, it will be your choice. You can take the *long path* or the *short path*. Either is perfectly acceptable. It is just that one will take you a little longer to get where you are going."

There was only one other time that I spoke to the Brothers about relationships. I don't remember why I asked the question or, for that matter, exactly what the question was, but in answering it the Teacher said that I had had a life in Italy in which I had felt that I had been treated badly by a woman that I loved. As a consequence, I had become angry with life in general and women in particular, had left the woman and the situation in a huff and had gone off to become a Franciscan monk. In that life, I evidently devoted myself as a Franciscan to animals.[29, 30]

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[29] An interesting side point: I have had in this life a very strong, natural rapport with animals—unusually strong.

[30] Another interesting side point: Up through my college years, I had a fiercely strong, angry unwillingness to be treated badly by any woman. If I thought a female was not keeping my best interests uppermost in her mind (a ludicrous requirement to put over anyone's head, I might add), I would get snarly and cut her off at the knees. I remember times when I would even mutter the word *war* when my thoughts had turned that way toward a particular female. On the surface, it was terribly irrational and, in many cases, a completely overblown way to react, but if the Brothers' story about that Italian life was accurate . . . and I had no reason to believe it wasn't . . . it made those impulses all the more understandable.

That was all they said about romance and my past lives. That, and the fact that I had a tendency to *attach myself to females*.[31]

When Kay died, as I said, everything changed. The members of the group were still friends, but the main focus of the group—our connection through Kay to the Brothers—was no more. As a consequence, people went their separate ways as they proceeded back into "normal life."

Although I may say more about this later, Brian ended up with a girlfriend who he ultimately married; Nick had a girlfriend (though I don't know how that turned out as I haven't heard from Nick in quite a while); and Cathy went to Santa Barbara to take care of her elderly parents and to continue writing.[32]

I more or less continued living life as I always had . . . sort of. In fact, I had never been a particularly good celibate. On a mental level, I was rarely able to fully animate the discipline. Nevertheless, I had lived a life that was woman-free in a physically intimate sense for nearly thirty years. So although I wouldn't have minded having a female present herself into my world after Kay died, I wasn't holding my breath and I certainly wasn't "looking."

Enter Mary.

What you are about to read in the next chapter happened about three years after Kay died. It all started out innocently enough, as you will see, but by the time the experience ended, I better understood what the Brothers had meant by their comments twenty years earlier. I also better understood the absolutely fascinating machinations of karma at work.

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[31] Something I was willing to accept even though I didn't see it in my daily life and really didn't understand it . . . though I do now.

[32] She and Kay had a herd of book ideas they never did collectively get to. Cathy had more than enough to keep her occupied. She has additionally become involved with a man who was in the process of creating a publishing house based in Philadelphia. (That last statement was written in 2006. As of 2015, her parents had finally died—her mom was 98 and cantankerous as sin during her last few years. Cathy finally sold her hacienda in California and was permanently living in Philly . . . though her daughter, Abby, was agitating for her to come back and live in Pasadena. She was, as of that point in time, very content . . . and now it's 2017 and she's just bought a condo in South Pasadena and is about to come back "home.")

Chapter 14

Karmic Knots and Mary

[Minor note: Toward the end of this chapter, I make the statement, "It was karma saying, 'Well, you screwed it up once. Let's see how you deal with the same situation this time around.'" Although there are parts of what you are about to read that kind of make me cringe, IT ALL HAD TO HAPPEN. As much as I'd like not to take time on this, I've bitten the bullet and included it all because the story has some serious, serious educational value.

Read it through. It is important.]

Karma's duty is to bring Consciousness, the Awareness that is you and me, into an understanding of what it means to skillfully *exist in matter*. A big part of this has to do with Beings learning how to deal with one another. Given human genetics and the strong animal instinct humans have to procreate, one of karma's more powerful tools in this regard are the interactions that come with the exercising of the sexual prerogatives.

Though this chapter does wisp across the topic of sex, it is really about karma, personal relationships and more karma.

As I said last chapter, I was told by the Brothers two things about previous lives that had to do with relationships.

The first was that I would meet someone *on my level* after I had become *established*. Furthermore, when I met this individual, I would have a choice to make. I would have to decide whether to take *the long path* or *the short path*. When I wrote this chapter I was not sure I had fulfilled that prediction (the why of that will become evident shortly).

The second was that I'd had a short-lived relationship with a woman several hundred years ago in Italy that hadn't worked out well, and the experience had left me feeling hurt and deceived and angry at mankind in general and womankind in particular.

These meetings with the Brothers happened when I was just starting out with them. As I then focused on other things, it didn't take long for

both conversations to fade in my memory.

Twenty-five plus years later, Kay died. As I said earlier, everything changed at that point in time. The members of the group went their separate ways, all proceeding more or less back into normal life.

About three years after Kay died, I ran into a very unexpected situation with a woman I will call *Mary*.[1] During the happenings, I kept a diary in which existed not only some very muddled thinking on my part but also some very interesting observations. That diary is the basis of what you are about to read.

_____x_____

[This starts with what I wrote several years ago but considerably after the fact.]

Having been a celibate for three decades, more or less, has been an interesting experience. In theory, the practice allows an individual the opportunity to approach people, especially women if you are a heterosexual male, without the underlying tension that comes when you want something from them . . . like getting laid. It relieves a male of the emotions that can cloud one's judgment when trying to help an attractive member of the opposite sex, and it allows one to see beyond the superficiality of the human form.[2] In short, it can be a very powerful tool in the hands of anyone, especially a younger person, who wants to engage in service to others on a selfless level.

I, unfortunately, wasn't a very good celibate. I carried off the out-

[1] The woman involved in this story asked that I not write about her and her family because she was afraid someone might recognize her story and identify her. The only reason I'm feeling free now is because I've changed things about her in my description of her, because *nobody* she knew is ever going to read this autobiography and because she died a year ago. Problem solved!

[2] To put it in the vernacular, assuming you are a heterosexual male, it means getting to a place where you aren't sidetracked by boobs and ass, face and form, that kind of thing. And I might add, all of what you are about to read was written in an era when the sexes were considered binary and hetero. So although I probably could have and should have re-written everything to include the possibility of a same-sex attraction, conforming to the current he/she/they, LGBTQ-inclusive format, I'm not going to do that hoping that the reader will do whatever extrapolating is necessary to make the message fit into their world. It isn't that I don't care. The problem is that at this point, I just don't have the energy. I'll say considerably more about the LGBTQ world in a later chapter. In fact, I suspect you will find it pretty interesting.

ward vestments of it just fine. I rarely hugged. I never kissed. I didn't date. I certainly didn't have sex. Under the surface, though, where the mental activity goes on, I really didn't succeed very well.

Breasts gave me a lot of trouble.[3] I remember going to the beach with my cousins in the late 1990s. There weren't many people there. We were all sitting on the sand, and I looked up the beach just in time to see a very shapely young woman dive into the ocean. I just saw her for an instant. She was in mid-air, arms outstretched, arching slightly toward the water with full breasts silhouetted in divine splendor. The image ruined me for a week. I just couldn't get the picture out of my head.

Even with that impediment, my life with Kay and the Brothers had been relatively happy. I'd had people to do things with, and I'd had a spiritual goal to work toward.

Still, there was always that whispering in the back of my head that said, "There is someone for you out there." What's more, I always suspected that when she arrived, she would recognize me before I would recognize her,[4] she would appear as a surprise already in love with me, and it would be as though she had known me forever.[5]

It would, in other words, be a karmic thing.[6] Having nothing else to go on, my small-self envisioned it as a *boy meets girl, boy gets girl, boy settles down with girl* type of affair . . . very neat, very tidy.

I didn't focus on this in my everyday life—it wasn't as though I spent my time looking around corners expecting her to appear—but in looking back it is obvious to me that underneath my conscious thinking I had a strong feeling it was coming.

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[3] Not to make too fine a point of it, but if you are a female with large breasts who knew me, my distraction with the *glands mammary* is not something to be either outraged about or distressed over. The lack of outrage should come in the knowledge that guys notice them, pigs that we are. Expecting that we wouldn't is kind of dumb. And as for the distress, it isn't as though I'd go home after having a pleasant conversation with you and begin to drool lecherously. There are very strong thoughtforms around breasts, thoughtforms that females often feed into. My noticing shouldn't be a surprise, and the fact that I spent so much effort NOT being swayed by such things only insured that my child-self's reaction to them would be magnified. In short, you were perfectly safe. There was no chance the battle would seep out beyond my mind, and there was education for me in the experience.

[4] This had been in my mind long before I met Kay.

[5] I've since learned that in hetero situations it is almost always the woman who picks the man. That means females ALWAYS know before the guy does. My situation wouldn't be all that unique.

[6] This, before I knew anything about "karma."

What you are about to read is the story of my relationship with the first woman I believed was the individual the Brothers told me I would meet. I may or may not have been wrong in that assessment, but the story is educational in any case, so here it is.

For those of you who are not ex-students of mine, you probably don't know that I wrote and self-published a physics texts that is possibly still being used by schools—there were around twenty-five as of 2008—across the country. The book was (and still is) unique in its format and approach, not very expensive as physics books go and was, I was told, quite readable.[7] That, and my willingness to freely help any teacher who needed a hand, made it a very attractive prospect for first-time teachers of Calculus driven physics.[8]

For the first several years that the book was available, I personally talked by phone to every teacher who thought about using it (being self-published, they had to go through me to get copies). I did this for one reason and one reason alone. The text required a somewhat unorthodox teaching style. I wanted to be sure that teachers knew what they were getting into before they spent their hard-earned money on a copy.

The point is, I always talked to prospective teachers, whether they were getting a personal copy or thinking about purchasing a class set, and I always offered help whether they decided to use the book or not. As such, it didn't surprise me to find that a woman from one of our southern states (I'll call her Mary), having had that initial phone conversation, start-

[7] This is not typical of most physics texts. I should add that the readability of my book was also not expected. I am a physics teacher, not a writer. Still, the first indication that the book might be really good, at least from a student's perspective, happened the first year the book was used outside of Poly. A few months into that year, I called one of the teachers using the text to see how things were going (his name was Gardner Friedlander—I didn't know it at the time, but he was kind of legend amongst AP Physics-test readers). I don't know if he thought I had ulterior motives or what, but I received a very icy response to the call which ended quickly. Because private school students usually buy their books new each year, and because I needed time to make up ordered books during the summer, and additionally because I didn't know if he was going to use the book that next year, I call him toward the end of the school year to see if he wanted me to include him in my next year's book run. During that conversation, he was all-kinds of friendly. *Why* became clear about halfway through that conversation. He said, "You know, I had the kids do an evaluation of your book. It surprised me, but the consensus was that your book was the easiest to read of any text they had ever used." That, for a Calculus-driven physics text!

[8] I can't tell you how many times I've had a teacher at the AP grading sessions, when they've found out who I was, tell me that my book was what got them through their first year of teaching AP Physics.

ed emailing and calling me on a fairly regular basis for help with her newly inherited Advanced Placement physics class. She was teaching in a very good public school outside a major city you have all heard of . . . but that I'll respectfully decline to name in deference to her anonymity. She had a friend (I'll call her Terry) in a similar situation. Terry taught in another school close to Mary's. The two had developed a nice working relationship. In fact, she and Terry would huddle every night at Mary's house and do physics problems for several hours.

There were certainly other physics teachers around who helped the two of them as they stormed through the material, but I was in a unique position. When it was 10:30 p.m. in their hometown—way too late to call someone close by—it was only 8:30 p.m. here in California. As such, I became their late-night helper.

For the entire school year, our email and phone conversations were physics related but generally light-hearted. Terry would occasionally come on the phone with a question, but she was obviously the younger of the two and definitely timid. It was usually Mary with whom I talked.

These were intelligent, hard-working, tenacious women who wanted to do the best they could for their students. I did the best I could for them whether their questions came by email or phone.

Minor note: I have always enjoyed making people laugh. This, of course, infuriated many a teacher back when I was in junior high school, not to mention high school and, yes, college. As a consequence, my personal style both with students and adult friends, both in person and in emails, has always been home-style with a fairly sizable dose of impishness.

I tease a lot, kind of like a friendly big brother. I play the occasional, benign, practical joke. I make obscure word associations that, if you think about them (or even if you don't think about them), have the potential of providing a bit of a chuckle.

In short, when I interact with people, I am naturally playful.

Mary's personal life wasn't any of my business. Still, my freewheeling approach to emailing sometimes inadvertently cajoled her and/or Terry into telling me stuff that really was more personal than professional. Nine times out of ten, I didn't even realize it was happening. After all, when it came to the two of them, I didn't want or expect anything. In my mind, it was just me being useful coupled with good, clean fun.

I got an email from Mary around Mother's Day that shaped my un-

official view of her family life. I had, in a jocular way, emailed her first to get the ball rolling. What follows is both my email and hers.

[Minor preface: She had found out that I'd written a book on Eastern philosophy. She asked for a copy, which I supplied, and she made an oblique comment during one of our phone conversations that suggested that she was, indeed, reading the book. I make mention of this because at least part of my email refers to both the book and the comment.]

Sun, 14 May xxxx

From: Craig

Dear Mary:

Two things:

First, I hope you had a nice Mother's Day. I'm sure everyone went out of their way to make it special, though what can you expect from tiny tots? In any case, I hope it was a good one (my mom is in Lake Tahoe, so I called her around 7 a.m. to say hi, then went surfing—it's amazing, a lot of students don't realize that teachers actually have mothers . . . though my kids are pretty accepting of teachers as human beings).

Secondly, the only place I remember talking about my fraternity in the E.Phil. book is in the chapter on SEX! What that means is that you've either jumped ahead (naughty girl) or you've been reading for some time and have finally gotten to that chapter. If it's the latter, bravo. If it's the former, I strongly suggest you go back and start at the beginning. There are a number of ideas that are typically not western that you need to have at least run into (even if you don't agree with them) before the east begins to make sense beyond the superficial. What the first seven chapters were designed to do is to give you that background.

Anyway, so much for an author's plea.

Be cool.

Craig

[Another minor note: Mary's husband was named Ken.]

Mon, 15 May xxxx

From: Mary

Dear Craig,

Three things:

First, thanks for the warm Mother's Day wishes. I had the most wonderful day. My children, who usually come to my side the moment they awaken, came in (amongst many pre-bedtime reminders from Ken) and got Ken up first. They all very "quietly" crept down the hall to the kitchen to prepare my breakfast. Probably the best present of the day was lying in my bed listening to my husband guide them in the writing of the breakfast menu, and the preparation and delivery of the breakfast tray to me in bed. Then the kids come in and snuggle up with me in bed, and Ken tells them not to eat my breakfast, and then he leaves to go fix their breakfast, and they (with my blessing) eat mine entirely up!! We then went to church and Ken got me a beautiful orchid corsage to wear, which I adore. Then great Mexican food for lunch (spinach quesadillas...how can you go wrong with spinach??), and a big fat afternoon nap for all. It was really quite a perfect day.

Second, Terry and I have our airline tickets. We will be arriving in Burbank Friday July xx,xx on Flight xxx at x:xx p.m.. We will depart Tuesday July xx,xx on Flight xxx at x:xx p.m..

What do you think the chances are of us seeing the ocean while we are there? I know we are not there to be tourists, but Terry has never been to CA or seen the Pacific Ocean. I have only been once, about two years ago, and that was to Monterey. It was the second most beautiful place I have ever seen!! I have no idea how close you are to the ocean, but I am guessing that as often as you go surfing it can't be too far. I really do want to learn as much physics as possible, but a little nature might be a nice balance!

Third, what a sharp listener you are!! I actually made it to that chapter the honest way, but if I had been smart enough to read the table of contents first then I might

have skipped ahead!! It is all very interesting, and no, I don't agree with all of it, but it is good food for thought. I am pleased that you shared the book with me. And I look forward to discussing it with you in person.

Including today, three days until the AP exam. Here's hoping they will be able to really show what they know. That is all I truly hope for.

Peace,
Mary

From this, I concluded that Mary was a happily married woman with a wonderful husband and great children.

You noticed, I'm sure, that in the middle of her email she mentioned arriving in California sometime in July. This requires a bit of explanation.

The only area in which the ladies did not do spectacularly well that first year was in the lab. They had good equipment, but they didn't have the preparation time required to do anything *with* the equipment. Their students were understanding and cooperative about this, but the deficiency was something the ladies knew had to be attended to for the next year.

They mentioned this during one of our February late-night conversations and I, ever ready to be helpful, said that it was a shame they didn't live closer because if they did, I'd have been glad to give them a hand with the problem.

One thing led to another, and the next thing I knew the two had decided to take me up on the offer and come out to California during the summer (actually, they kind of invited themselves, but that was OK with me—I *had* offered to help) after they had completed the AP workshops they were scheduled to attend in their hometown. When here, they would stay with me in Pasadena.

I should mention that there was no possibility of anything even faintly resembling romance in this arrangement. Mary was married to a good man and had two loving children. Terry was single but had a boyfriend who was, at that time, working to earn enough money to buy her a wedding ring.[9] What's more, from my Eastern Philosophy book, they had both deduced that I was undoubtedly a celibate.

Everything was very innocent. It was going to be a physics extravaganza. That was fine with me.

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[9] She has since married.

Summer arrived. I picked the two of them up at Burbank Airport around 8 p.m. on a Saturday night.

Terry was a pretty young lady who had, I found out later, an interesting reaction to any food that was green (can you spell VEGETABLES?). In fact, I was barely able to get her to try broccoli—something she liked only after Mary suggested she eat with lemon.

Mary was not much older than Terry. Though she was petite, she was definitely the leader of the gang.

I was late to the airport, but I found them in the baggage claim area. They collected their stuff, got their car and followed me back to Pasadena. When we got to my home, I fed them vegie-burgers, broccoli—Terry said her mother would be so proud to know that she actually ate a few bites of it—and beets covered in lemon juice. Afterwards, we talked a bit, then they made up their beds in the living room and crashed. Mary slept on the couch while Terry slept on an inflatable camping bed I'd bought for the occasion.[10]

On Saturday, we went to Poly to concentrate on doing labs. One of the math teachers showed up around 10 a.m. to talk to the ladies about CBL's—calculator-based labs—and a good time was had by all. I was cooking for friends and the ladies that night, so I ended the day around 3 p.m. with a series of cool demonstrations.[11]

That night, Cathy, Mark,[12] Mark's girlfriend Sarah, a friend of Cathy's and mine named Kay (Kay was the PE teacher I mentioned earlier), and the ladies were there for dinner. Afterwards, Cathy and Kay split. Mark, Sarah, Mary, Terry and I all sat around the kitchen table and talked. We told stories about both funny and embarrassing moments in our lives during which I regaled them with several of my college-days stories . . . and we told jokes—some clean, some dirty, but all very funny. Around 11:30 p.m., everyone pooped out and we all went our separate ways to bed.

It was surprising, but we managed to do all the physics the ladies were interested in on Saturday. As of Sunday, we were free to frolic until

[10] I had a whole house to myself, but my front bedroom was full of books and stuff—remember that library—and not really habitable. That is why the ladies slept in the living room.

[11] I had a 3-foot diameter spherical mirror that could do mind bending things, and I had a dancing flames demo that would knock your socks off.

[12] You met Mark's mother, Bev, earlier. If you will remember, she died of lung cancer due to smoking when he was young. We told her we would look after him. He was living in my back bungalow after having spent nine years at Yale working toward a PhD in Egyptology.

Tuesday when they were scheduled to leave.

As Terry had never been out of her hometown before this trip, I, at Mary's request, suggested that she (Terry) might like to see both the mountains and the ocean. We decided to do the mountains first.

On Sunday, we all got up by 8 a.m. I was ready to go by 8:15, but Terry proceeded to take two hours to prepare for the day. That included straightening her hair . . . something she really didn't have to do because her hair was quite pretty in its natural state. Nevertheless, once she was ready to go we went to Lake Arrowhead for the day.

We had a delightful time. We put our feet in the lake water. We had a nice lunch at a popular restaurant on the lake. We asked the waitress where the locals went to hike and were told about a trail that led to a stream. We found the trail, enjoyed the stream relaxing for the better part of an hour, then decided it was time to return.

We got back to Pasadena around 6:30 p.m. I took my nightly shower. We then proceeded to go to the *All India Cafe* for dinner. Unfortunately, it was closed. We went to *Mijares* for Mexican food instead. After dinner, I walked them through the Caltech campus.

That night we again talked when we got back to my house. Mary had questions about my Eastern Philosophy book. I explained things as best I could (I obviously didn't say anything directly about the Brothers—I treated her just like one of my E.Phil students). She seemed satisfied by the time I was done, though I don't know if it was politeness or what. We finished around 11 p.m. and, as usual, everyone departed to snooze.

Monday was the last full day the ladies would be here, and it was designated beach day. We got up at 5 a.m. to go surfing. Terry let her hair go, so we got out quickly. We went to Huntington Beach. I got into my winter wet suit, put Terry into my spring wet suit, then took her out into the white water. She'd lie on my surfboard, I'd give the board a push when the white water arrived, and she'd ride the surf to the shore. She had a little trouble with pearling (i.e., the nose of the board diving) which she was able to remedy by arching her back to shift her weight toward the rear of the board, but she wiped out pretty spectacularly at least three or four times.

When I thought she'd had enough, I took her in, gave the wet suit to Mary.[13] Mary went out into the white water just as Terry had done. She

[13] I played what, to me, was a big-brother-harassing-little-sister move and dumped Mary into the water before doing this. I was hoping that she would decide the water wasn't that cold and we could dispense with the wet suit. It didn't work and she had to control herself not to clobber me for the move.

seemed more determined to do well, was able to get to her knees, and almost stood up a couple of times.

After the ladies had their fling, I went out and caught a few waves in the next twenty minutes. As I, too, was just learning,[14] this was not bad for me. I then took Mary out for another twenty or so minutes before we called it quits.

With everyone satisfied, we gathered our stuff and went over to the pier to watch a pro competition that was happening there. The pros were very impressive.

We left Huntington Beach and drove a short distance to a cafe that had good vegie food along with things Terry would eat. We had a nice brunch, then drove down the coast through Newport and on to Laguna. I was hoping to find the Mengelsen Photographic Studio there, but it had evidently closed up shop. We drove back through Laguna Canyon and got home around 2 p.m. Everyone took naps. Terry slept to 6 p.m.

We went to the *All India Cafe* again, this time actually eating there. The ladies liked the rice, mixed chutneys, masala dosa, salad, and rice biryani. They did not like the palak panir, the sambar or the sweet lassi. Afterwards, we went over to Poly and I Xeroxed a bunch of conceptual questions and solutions for them to take back when they left.

We got home around 9:30 p.m. and talked for a while, then everyone went to bed.

During their time with me, I had been my old, jovial self. I was considerably older than both of them, so I had teased them as I do my students. It was a fun, carefree time, and I think the ladies enjoyed themselves.

During dinner that last night, the ladies acted a bit conspiratorial and suggestively secretive. At one point they asked me what I slept in. I told them my underwear. After some more whispering, they finally said that they had a really amazing practical joke in mind for me, and that I'd better sleep with one eye open. I just laughed at them. After all, what were they going to do, put make-up on me? Fat chance.[15]

I went to bed in full knowledge that there was little chance the ladies could do anything that would surprise me. In fact, I was wrong.

Around 4 a.m., I awoke to the presence of a person standing in the

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[14] Most people who surf learn when they are young kids or, maybe, in their teens. I learned when I was 55 so I was still very much a neophyte.

[15] In fact, their original idea was to paint my toenails some awful color, but that isn't what they ultimately did.

doorway of my bedroom peering in. It was Mary with Terry directly behind her. This obviously had to do with the execution of their practical joke, so instead of letting them sneak into my room to do . . . whatever . . . I boomed BOO at the top of my lungs making Mary jumped right off the ground.

Once she realized I was awake, she rushed the bed. When she arrived, she said "Move over," which I dutifully did. She pulled back the sheet and hopped in next to me. In the meantime, Terry had scurried around and hopped into bed on my other side. There was some serious commotion about blankets getting tangled up and the comforter landing on the floor, but by the time the dust had settled we were all under the same sheet with one lady on either side of me.

The first thing Mary said was, "You realize you have no rights here."

Understanding that this was nothing more than their big joke on *the celibate*, I said, "I know."

The ladies were fully clothed with flannel nightgowns on, so although we really weren't touching, I was still more or less sandwiched between the two heat generating bodies. I like to sleep cold. So although nobody was touching anybody, the presence of these warm bodies in the vicinity of my own brought my temperature up considerably.[16] I got up to put the air conditioner on, then lay back down between the two with my arms crossed over my chest like a corpse to keep my hands from inadvertently ending up somewhere they shouldn't be. Without thought, I was being *a good boy*.

It was a great practical joke and turned into a bit of a slumber party. We talked and joked and laughed, and at one point in time Mary realized that I was ticklish and began to poke at me. Terry was slow to join in, so I focused my attention on forcibly subduing Mary. In moments I had pinned both her hands together over her head with one of mine,[17] then turned to deal with Terry. She had not really gotten started, so seeing her compatriot completely defeated she took the safer road and capitulate without advancing a single tickle. I made them both promise to be good, then released Mary's hands, rolled again onto my back, and took up my coffin-like position between the two of them.

Shortly thereafter, Mary made a comment about the odds that I, being a celibate, was completely unaffected by the fact that I had two women in my bed. I responded that she was lucky I hadn't yet fallen back to sleep. She laughed and said something to the effect of *just try*.

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16 No, it didn't go up for the reason you're thinking . . . shame on you.

17 As I did this, she mumbled something to the effect of, "Lord, you *are* strong."

Time proceeded. Things quieted down. Terry finally did fall asleep (or, at least, I think she did).

[TWO NOTES: First: There were several instances during my tenure at Poly when attractive females decided that I might just "do" in the role of *boyfriend* or *father for their child* or just plain *husband*, and who made moves toward me with such thoughts in mind. As these episodes happened when I was fully involved with the Brothers, I always parried them in a kindly but successful way. In short, I never allowed anyone to get close to me on a *boyfriend/girlfriend* level—I always kept things at the *friends* stage.

Second: I want to remind you that I'm recounting this tale in relative detail because it has some very interesting things to say down the line about the way karma works.]

More time passed. Mary was on my right. I noticed that she was facing me resting on her left side, and that she was close enough to me so that her breasts were just touching my right elbow (my hands were still on my chest).

I laughingly mentioned that when I was sleeping with my girlfriend in college, we would always end up butt to butt. Given the fact that our body language suggested we didn't really want anything to do with one another, which was probably true in a psychological sort of way, I observed that that wasn't a very good sign. Mary said that she and her husband usually slept in what Cathy later called *spoon* position—one person tucked up against the back of the other person.

Conversation slowed. I rolled onto my left side so that my back was to Mary. I was still being careful to keep my hands out of harm's way, so I'd folded my arms up and clasped my hands together resting them on my neck just below my cheek. Mary reached over and began to play with my thumb. She was obviously trying to get my attention.

I rolled back over onto my back. She was still facing me and was close. She rolled over onto her back. We talked a little more. As we talked, I rolled over onto my right side so that I was facing her.

We talked a little more, then she rolled over onto her right side so she was facing away from me, then scooted back my way. This sure as hell wasn't something I was expecting, but the end result was that we ended up

in spoon position.

[ANOTHER BLINKING NOTE: When Kay died, my intent was never to go out of my way to kick up my heals. My attitude was that life was going to change, and that I would accept wherever it nudged me. This is important to know. My idea of "appropriate behavior" was to flow in whatever direction karma pushed as long as it wasn't way outside the bounds of propriety. If, when she first arrived, Mary had suggested that the two of us might sleep together, I would have respectfully declined. But that wasn't the way it went down. Karma was very clever in the way it engineered our interaction. Though it wasn't obvious to me at the time, there was a reason for this little encounter. What it was will become evident shortly.]

By this time, in a very uncelibate-like way, I had become . . . how should I say . . . well, *excited* (give me a break—I *am* a guy). Her body was pushing up against mine. She knew what state I was in. She wasn't shying away.

This was a surprise I was not very well prepared to deal with. My brain was bouncing around like a ping-pong ball. The higher side of my child-self was saying, "This is not something you should be doing." The lesser side of my child-self was saying, "Are you out of your fricking mind? . . . You'll never get a chance like this again . . . "

It was, in a cosmic sense, quite amusing.[18] Without going into enormous detail, I will say that I did *not* have sex *in any form whatsoever* with that woman (thank you for clearing up that possible point of confusion, Mr. Clinton). I didn't even kiss her. I did, though, enjoy a fairly full exploration of the upper half of her body (again, I'm point this out because it will be important later) before things came to a roaring halt.

This all took place between 6:00 a.m. and 6:15 a.m. I don't know where it would have ultimately gone, given the fact that Terry was on the other side of me supposedly asleep. We never found out. Around 6:15 a.m., we heard a key unlock the back door into the back-porch/laundry

[18] When I thought about it later, it reminded me of a Donald Duck cartoon I once saw (I think it was Donald Duck) where little Donald-the-angel is sitting on one of Donald's shoulders while little Donald-the-devil is sitting on the other. Each is trying to talk Donald into doing or not doing something or other. The cartoon industry in the 1950s was evidently quite good at hitting human nature dead-on.

room that is just outside my bedroom door. It was Mark coming in the back door as quietly as he could, looking to get his laundry (again, karma being amazingly clever).

His entrance into the back porch startled the three of us. I didn't know exactly what to do, but Mary jumped out of bed, rearranged her clothes, met him on the back porch and essentially chatted him up. Her take after he was gone was that he was unstartled by the turn of events. (I found out later that he didn't even consider the possibility that she and I might have been in the same bed together. Knowing me, he figured she was using my bed and I was somewhere else. I disabused him of that notion by telling him about the prank. I didn't go into details.)

After Mark left, we all got up, got dressed and went for a hike up Eaton Canyon. In the meantime, I defaulted back into my old ways. I treated the ladies as I always had, like an impish younger (or older) brother. I wasn't feeling at all frustrated for *not* having had the morning's festivities move beyond the stage of what would, in high school, be called *casual petting*,[19] a feeling that evidently wasn't shared by Mary. But hell's bells, having sex wasn't on the agenda as far as I was concerned in any case, so being deprived of the possibility by Mark's entrance didn't much affect me.

Eaton Canyon was beautiful. We waded in the pond under the waterfall at the end of the canyon. Mary got her revenge for my pushing her into the ocean the day before by getting me wet. After getting soaked, we stood under the waterfall together and Terry tried to take a picture. At one point, Mary suggested that I grab Terry and pull her into the water. She even made an oblique reference to a wet T-shirt contest, then quietly added as an aside that we had already gone way passed that point. We stayed for a time longer, then went back to the car.

We drove to Caltech so Terry could get a souvenir T-shirt, then went back to my house. Mary said she needed a shower, having completely immersed herself and me in the pool at the falls. After a few minutes, I heard Mary's voice from the bathroom calling my name in a soft, seductive way. Something told me it wasn't a good idea to respond, so I went into the front bathroom and just sat for a while. Once I knew she was done with her shower, I went around and collected her clothes for drying.

I made them my standard lunch. After lunch, Mary said she was tired and wanted to rest. I let her use my bed. It was relatively cold due to the

[19] Though as I remember, absolutely nothing having to do with sex in high school was considered "casual." It was all very serious stuff.

air conditioner, so she got to snuggle down under my comforter and sleep for a short while. It was almost impossible to get her up. She kept saying, "Just let me stay for a few more minutes." Terry and I finally rousted her.

I took them to the airport around 1 p.m. Mary told me she intended to come back the next summer, and that maybe we could go camping in Yosemite. I said, "OK," only to have her launch into a discussion of the Allen Alda movie *Same Time, Next Year* in which two married people had an affair in which they'd meet once a year for a week. It seemed that this was something she wanted to do with me. She said so two or three times.

I walked them to their terminal, hugged both of them and left. On the whole, it had been a thoroughly enjoyable several days even though it ended in a way that had been weird beyond belief.

END OF ENTRY.

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One of the odder things about the experience I had with Mary was that right after they left, I didn't have the slightest feeling that I had done anything wrong or out-of-the-ordinary. It felt completely comfortable. It felt completely natural. It felt like something we had done hundreds of times before. NOT A SINGLE THOUGHT of remorse, guilt, or regret passed through my mind for an entire day. As I told Cathy later, either I had suddenly become totally amoral or there was some SERIOUS KARMIC STUFF going on underneath the surface. My emotional reaction to the ramifications of the episode was completely noncommittal.

My first indication that things might not be hunky dory came in the form of a dream I had while napping the day after the ladies left. In the dream, I was in a car traveling to my home. I came over a hill to find the entire landscape awash with water from a rising lake. My house was on a slant, in the water and partially inundated. Water was almost to the windowsills on the downside of the house, and all the windows of the house were broken.

The car jammed to a halt, almost sliding into the lake in the process. I got out, jumped through a window into the house, and proceeded to look around for my cat and anything else I might rescue. I grabbed the only object in the dream that was in color, an odd statue that supposedly had belonged to Kay, then called for the cat. She came, I gathered her up, looked around to see what else I might come back for, then started for the window

as the house began to gently tilt as though it was going to slide even farther into the water. Then I awoke.

In my lexicon of dream symbols, water always means some kind of trouble. It doesn't have to be big trouble, but it's trouble. A house, on the other hand, is where you live. It usually symbolizes my inner, mental world. Broken windows in my house are not a good thing. Neither is having two feet of water inside my house. Something either had or was about to happen that would severely affect my world. That was what the dream was telling me.

When I woke up, the dream brought me into focus. I began to think about that morning with Mary from a more conventional perspective. I thought about her husband. This certainly wasn't fair to him. I thought about her children and what might happen should we continue with this and get caught. And I thought about how insane it was that I was thinking about messing around with a married woman in any case.

That afternoon, Mary called. It was around 4 p.m. my time. She asked me how I felt about the happenings of the previous morning. I told her I had mixed feelings about it. She said she did too.

She told me that as she was flying home, she could see that something had died inside her over the last ten years (since she had married). Being with me had reawakened that something. She told me that when the wheels touched down on her flight home, she realized how much she didn't want to be there. She said she'd had the most powerful desire to buy a return ticket to come back to Pasadena. She said that the only thing that stopped her was her unwillingness to leave her children with the knowledge that she had abandoned them.

She said that before she came out to see me, she was a happily married woman. She said that on the plane trip out, if anyone had suggested that the things that were going through her head might *ever* go through her head, she would have been insulted and angered. Yet it was happening. She was contemplating all sorts of radical things, leaving her husband and family included . . . and it had all landed on her without the slightest warning. It was as though she had gone insane.

She said of that morning that there was no doubt in her mind at the time that we were going to make love. The only reason we didn't was the presence of Terry in bed on the other side of me. She must have said four or five times how frustrated she had been that morning, and how frustrated she still was that we hadn't completed the act. She asked me if I was also frustrated. I said *no*, which really confused her.

I told her that I had spent a fair portion of my life keeping my hands off women, and that although it seemed very natural to be with her, that I had felt contented just knowing that she *wanted* to be with me. It was more of a mental thing than a physical thing.

There was one other thing she told me during that first phone call. It was lucky that Terry *had* been in bed next to me, and that I *hadn't* gone to her when she called me in the bathroom after the canyon walk. When she got home, she did the math and found that she was in the middle of her fertility cycle. In fact, she was dead center. Given that celibates don't generally keep condoms around the house, any intimacy that morning would have undoubtedly produced an unexpected result. She would probably have become pregnant.

As a mild side-point: There is something very exotic and seductive about having someone want you. This, especially if there has always been in the back of your mind the idea that some past love "would recognize me before I would recognize her, would appear as a surprise already in love with me, and would be as though she had known me forever." I wasn't thinking about any of this at the time, but in looking back I can see why I was feeling more and more as though this woman might be someone I was meant to be with.

That night, I had three more dreams. In the first, I was sitting in a tram run by a woman operator. At some point, the two of us began to cuddle. I recognized her as Mary. The tram stopped because it had to change tracks. I got out to adjust some levers, and when I got back in she was gone. A new conductor had arrived. When I asked where Mary was, the new conductor said she would be back. Then, one of those disjointed shifts happened that seems perfectly reasonable in a dream, and I found myself outside the tram. Mary approached me. Her lips were bloodied. When she opened her mouth, it looked like someone had used a Dremel on her teeth, cutting long vertical grooves through them. I had the feeling that I was somehow responsible, that I had tried to do something with her that had failed and the messed-up teeth and bleeding lips were the consequence. I first tried to embrace her to comfort her, but she seemed angry at me. She kicked at me, but I held her away so she couldn't hurt me. I then woke up.

This little gem definitely got my attention. It was around 2 a.m., but I sat thinking about the dream for quite a while before going back to

sleep. There wasn't standard symbolism in the dream, but on the surface it looked like something I was going to do (or had done) was going to hurt her. I didn't like it. It wasn't good.

The second dream had me in an encounter with the Dark Side. I entered a huge, vaulted room much like a high school gymnasium. What was weird about the room was that it was designed to kill sound. If you said something, the room would absorb it completely leaving no trace. It was an evil place. I sat down in the middle of the room. In my mind, I created a place where sound could exist. I then filled that place with an AUM. As the sound and place grew in my mind, the space I was creating became bigger and bigger until it completely filled the entire room. I had transformed the soundless room into a place where sound could exist.

This was also not a typical, symbolic dream, but at least it was positive. It told me that I wouldn't lose my ability to build within myself something good.

The last dream came around 4 a.m. I was on a round log in the middle of a deep, wide, fast-moving river. Mary was ahead of me in the form of another log, but one that was cocked funny. I approached her to try to set her right, but when I nudged her she veered off and got caught in the reeds on the side of the stream while I continued on. I tried to get over to the edge to get out and walk back to where she was, but there were too many logs in the way and the water was moving too fast. I couldn't get out.

Again, not standard symbolism, but not good. It appeared that Mary and I were going to end up separated (not that we were exactly together at the time).

I decided against telling Mary the dreams. I hoped that I wasn't going to be hurting her, and that we weren't going to separate (even as just friends), but if it was going to happen I figured I'd better let it happen naturally rather than foreshadowing the events by putting horror stories into her head.

In subsequent phone calls, Mary told me several more things. She said that she and Terry had decided that I must be a celibate. Not only that, they had speculated that I might also be a 300-pound midget. She told me later that she could deal with the celibacy, but if I'd been a 300-pound midget, she wouldn't have been able to get around that.[20]

She told me I had a voice that was grandfatherly. She and Terry had figured out from a story in the E.Phil. book that I was in my 50's, but she

[20] This, long before referring to "little people" as midgets was deemed inappropriate.

said it took her quite a while after meeting me to make the voice and the body match (I'm told I don't look my age, though I don't see it). She went on to say that her attraction to me wasn't a physical thing. It wasn't my face or body.[21] There was something else. She had felt it the first time we talked on the phone. It was in my voice, but she couldn't really put her finger on what it was. It was just there.

Several times she asked me, "Why?" Why did she feel this way? Why did this happen? She didn't know anything about the Brothers at the time, but it was as though she knew I ought to be able to answer these questions even though she had no good reason to believe that that might be so.

I had no idea at the time what to say. She had told me that she loved her husband and that he was a good man and a good father. She had said he loved his children and they loved him. She had said she and he were thinking about maybe having another baby, and that she was proud of her family. Then, seemingly in the next breath, she would say how much she missed being with me, and how much she wanted to come back.

Given what I knew, about the only answer I could give her was that the two of us must have a very strong karmic connection, and that, who knew, maybe we might even be *soul mates*. If she was happily married before coming out to California, what else could it have been?

Note: It is interesting how I can get an idea into my head and it sticks there even if there is evidence that, just maybe, things aren't exactly as I originally thought.

With time, a whole series of additional bits and pieces of information came out about her marriage. She had met her husband, had had a whirlwind romance, married, then found that he had a drinking problem. She confronted him, battled with him, and finally he stopped drinking. When he stopped, she said she'd never leave him as long as he stayed dry.

By that time, they had two children and she had a very large, vested interest in her marriage and her family. When she came out to see me, Mary considered her marriage, such as it was, to be a relatively happy one. What she didn't see was that she was compartmentalizing her circumstance like mad. When she ran into me, it was as though that compartmentalization became transparent. She realized her situation with her husband

[21] The way she put it was, "I didn't see you and think, 'gotta have some of that'."

was not, indeed, a happy one, and she realized she had a very big problem. The difficulty was that her husband wasn't a bad father, or so her compartmentalized-self felt. There was no way she could divorce, breaking up the kid's world for her own happiness, taking them away from the father they loved dearly. She had also promised to continue to support him as long as he was sober. With regard to her desire to come to me, in short and in her own words, she was screwed.

As the futility of the situation became more and more apparent, I was up and down like a yo-yo. I remember having dinner with Cathy one night at *The All India Cafe* in Pasadena, and the two of us actually laughing about how completely air-tight karma had rigged the deal. At other times, I was in complete despair. I remember thinking more than once that I really didn't believe that karma was doing this to me.[22]

As usual, karma and life didn't let me just wallow in my emotions. My tendency to introspection moved me at one point to see quite vividly how people could become embittered with life. I could see the seeds of bitterness even in me. I saw how people could become angry with life, could come to hate life, could come to want nothing more to do with life. More importantly, *I came to see how a chela could fail in life*. As always, the experience brought a series of profound enlightenments.

There were periods when I wouldn't call my thinking enlightening, but it was lucid. The situation with Mary came to me—I didn't seek it out. I knew that what I was doing—messing around with a whole lot of people's lives—was wrong. Yet there were things holding me back from cutting it off.

She called almost every day. There is something very provocative about having someone so completely taken with you that they can't stand not being in contact with you. There were times when we would be on the phone, and she would stop the conversation to tell me how horny she was feeling. It wasn't phone sex, but it was powerful stuff (not to mention amazingly embarrassing to admit here).

What was even more interesting was the fact that *whenever I got to a point where I was ready to end the madness*, I would get a very real, vivid

[22] I have long since come to realize how totally and completely laser-focused karma was during the incident. Things had to proceed exactly as they did (the why of which will become evident soon).

remembrance of my hand on her breast. Breasts again . . . SHIT!

I got to know more about her husband. He was a good father when he was engaged, but he wasn't engaged often. He had lost his sex drive since he stopped with the alcohol, so they rarely had sex.[23] He was not a nurturing kind to start with, so she began to realize that her idea of a happy marriage, which she really felt she had before meeting me, was really a situation in which she had focused on the good things—her job, her friends, her children—and glossed over all the stuff that wasn't good. She had submerged herself and her feelings for her children into the hope of having a "normal" family life.

[I mentioned above how laser-focused karma was in this whole affair. If I had been someone looking in from outside, the fiasco would undoubtedly have drawn me to conclude that she was simply a lonely, horny housewife. What was remarkable was that within the privacy of my meditations, when it should have become clear that I might have been nothing more than an escape for her, that option never presented itself. As I've already said, the *why* of that, from a karmic perspective, will become evident shortly.]

As time proceeded, several things shook out. She loved me, but she couldn't ruin her children's lives for the sake of her own happiness. Her responsibility to them was paramount, which I agreed with. If it had been just her husband and herself, she would have divorced him in a heartbeat. That wasn't the case.

Along with all of that, I had this odd feel I *owed* her something, like a good life. I couldn't explain the how and why of the matter at the time, but it was something I felt and it was very strong. I also felt that she had to be the one who made the decisions as to how we would proceed. If she wanted to get a divorce and move in with me (along with her kids), so be it. If she decided we would simply be lovers, so be it. If she decided we had to part, so be it. It was completely her show. It was almost as though I was an innocent bystander.

Guilt in her was a huge problem (this, it turns out, was a very important ingredient in the sauce). She said that this was the strangest experience of her life. One minute, it was all she could do from exploding for thinking

[23] He claimed that that was normal for recovering addicts.

about being with me. The next moment, literally, she was thinking what a fool she was for even *thinking* about breaking up her family. Then the next moment, she would be back, thinking about being with me. She was not used to being out of control, but that was what she was. It was tearing her apart, and the mental pain from being pulled one direction, then the other direction, was overwhelming.

A month or so after she left my house that summer, I realized how desperately tortured she was feeling about everything and I decide that for her sake, things had to cease (this was the *only* time throughout the entire experience that she wasn't the instigator and decider of how things would go). This was at the end of May. Her school year had started whereas mine hadn't, so I was at home during the week while she was already dealing with students. She only had email at school, so on a Sunday afternoon I wrote her a very gentle, kindly email that said that for her peace of mind, it was time to let things die. Then, because I didn't know what to say to her if she called that afternoon (which she usually did), I didn't answer the phone for the rest of the day. Also, before going to bed, I took the phone off the hook. I didn't put it back onto the hook until I awoke the next morning.

I had titled the email, "DON'T READ UNTIL AFTER SCHOOL," so I assumed she wouldn't get the message until late in the day. I was wrong.

When I awoke, I put the phone back on the hook. Around 8:30 a.m. it rang. I didn't answer it but let the voice machine pick up. It was Mary, sobbing. She said it just couldn't end like this, and that she loved me and didn't want me to go, and that we were a couple and that although I might be right, it wasn't right for one member to make a decision like that without allowing the other to have her say.

I realized that the poor thing was in the middle of the school day, probably between classes, so I picked up the phone. I told her to calm down. I gave her a slightly bad time for not heeding the heading—"don't read until after school," then lightened up knowing that being scolded wasn't something she needed at that point. I finally told her I would call her at school at 3:30 p.m. her time so we could talk. I knew that in three minutes she had to teach, so I told her to go into the bathroom, splash some water into her face, dry her eyes, and go to class. She made me promise I'd call. I again said I would.

About an hour later, I got a call from Cathy. Mary had evidently left two messages on her machine earlier that morning, both frantic, both saying that I was blocking her from getting through to me and pleading with

Cathy to intervene on her behalf. I told Cathy about my conversation with Mary. I said I'd decided it wasn't such a good idea to cut things off, given how she seemed to feel about it. The two of us parting concluding that this was a much bigger deal for Mary than I had expected.

When the dust settled, I sat down in meditation. THIS IS WHEN THINGS GOT INTERESTING and the bored, horny housewife theory would have gone out the window if, indeed, it had been in my thinking in the first place. In fact, it was at this point that everything began to drop into place.

Meditation is a very strange thing in the sense that it can take you places you don't expect to go. It is also almost impossible to express the subtlety and depth of feeling that can come in meditation. I'm sure a skeptic would suggest that what I saw that morning was just wishful thinking. I don't believe it was.

If you will remember, the Brothers had told me that I'd had a life in Italy during which I'd fallen in love with a woman. Something happened—they didn't say what—and I came out of the experience feeling betrayed. Deeply hurt, I left and went to Assisi where I became a Franciscan monk. I was bitter and angry. I spend the rest of my life there in the monastery tending to the animals because as far as I was concerned, animals I could trust, people I couldn't.

Although I hadn't thought about that conversation with the Brothers *for nearly thirty years*, and although it was not on my mind when I started the meditation, what came in pictures as the meditation proceeded that morning was what really had happened in that Italian life.

I had fallen in love with a woman who was married to a very wealthy, powerful man. She had fallen in love with me. (It was not evident in the meditation whether it was a soul-mate situation or just karma freewheeling, which is to say, a normal, human interaction with no special karmic undercurrent.) At some point in the relationship I asked her to leave her husband and come with me. She couldn't, not because she didn't love me but because she had children that she loved and felt responsible for. She *couldn't* just leave, so she told me *no*.

I, being basically self-involved, didn't even try to understand what was going on in her life. I simply concluded that she didn't really love me at all, and that our episode had been a deception. I'm sure she tried to dissuade me of that during our last meeting, but I wouldn't listen. Feeling betrayed, I packed my bags that night and departed for Assisi. I left no

word for her as to where I was going. I was angry and I wanted to punish her for hurting me.

Well, I succeeded in that. In leaving, I broke her heart. My abandonment of her saddened the rest of her days.

What I realized at the end of this series of pictures was that Mary was that woman. She had been completely undone when she came into contact with me during that four-day physics trip, just as would be expected of someone who had another chance at a deeply held, long lost love. And when I sent her the break-up email, complete with barring her from contact by phone after the fact, down deep in her subconscious I know she was screaming, "He's doing it again!"

In other words, her franticness to keep me was not irrational. It was the act of a woman who had had something like this happen to her before. I was leaving and I wasn't letting her have anything to say about it. She responded by going into emotional overdrive.[24]

It became evident that what was happening with this monumentally impossible situation I was living through now, was karma saying, "Well, you screwed it up once. Let's see how you deal with the same situation this time around."

Over the next several weeks, a number of other tiny enlightenments and meditative vignettes dropped on me. The most important was that during the Italian life, Mary had sent people out to find me. She had decided that if she ever got me back, she would hold me to herself and never let me go. She poured an enormous amount of emotion energy into that desire thereby creating within herself what could best be described as a massive, living thought-form focused on being with me.[25]

Our whole reason for coming together in this life was to let her have the time she needed to dismantle that thought-form. It was subtle, but it was nevertheless a huge anchor around her neck and my neck. It was

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[24] She informed me later that if I hadn't responded to her emails and phone calls, she had intended to catch a plane and fly to Pasadena to confront me in person.

[25] Several chapters ago I talked about how all-enveloping the fabric of thought is, and how completely thought-forms and the world in which they reside (the inner worlds) governs how you and I deal with the world. Someone who becomes obsessed with something, like wanting another human being, creates a very real, living thing that doesn't go away with the death of the body. The way karma links Beings to their past actions, and the way Beings are held responsible for those deeds, is through the thought-forms those Beings have animated and fed over their many lives.

unfinished business that had to be taken care of before either of us could move on. It needed to be dealt with, and karma had contrived the circumstance required to allow that to happen.

Of course, as I thought about it, it became evident that karma would never allow us to be together until she got control of herself, if then. Even that didn't seem very possible, given her reaction to my mere presence.[26] But my strong feeling of owing her, and my strong feeling that she needed to be the one who made the decisions, became clearer.

What was interesting, though, was that if she ever *did* get hold of herself, there was a very real chance that her feelings toward me would change. She may not *want* to get back together if the opportunity arose.

Still, it became more and more obvious as time proceeded that what she was trying to do was to take control of her life again, and that that was *exactly* what karma was pushing her to do while simultaneously keeping me from pushing in *any* direction.[27]

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OBSERVATIONS:

What follows are some of the observations I made at various points in time during and after my stint with Mary.

—This was Mary's relationship from the word *go*. She was the one who, in spite of raised eyebrows from her husband's male friends, contrived a trip to see me during which she and Terry would actually stay in my house. Mary was the one who crawled into bed with me, hauling Terry along with her for appearances. She was the one who was ready to buy a plane ticket back to me after returning home. She was the one with the family, hence the need to make decisions about what she would do. She was the one with the need to hear my voice and, consequently, she was

[26] She told me that once she started calling me, she couldn't stop wanting to talk to me. She said I was like a drug. Once she started, all she could think about was having more.

[27] Funny thing, I wrote this chapter years ago and just now, upon reading it for the umpteenth time, noticed that I never said how she resolved the mess. In fact, karma was counting on her sense of honor and her unwillingness to put her own happiness ahead of that of her children's, just as was the case in the Italian life. True to form, that led her to step away from the situation with me. It was hard for me at the time because I was all revved up, but underneath it all I knew she was doing the right thing and totally accepted the move even though I did miss the excitement.

the one with the phone bills. She was the one in the driver's seat.[28] And probably most important, she was the one who needed to take the steps to end it all, should ending be where it was all going.

In short, I was like a passenger on a train. As expected, it was emotionally unsettling when she ended things, but it was her necessity and her pain that was driving the experience. It was all her.

—One of the things that kept nagging me was the Brother's reference to taking *the long path* versus *the short path*. What were these paths?

My original thought twenty-eight years ago when the Brothers first made the statement was that the short path was simply my ignoring whoever might come as they had predicted.[29] From that view, the *long path* would have been the accepting of that individual into my life.

What was bizarre about the situation with Mary was that I really never had a choice in the matter. Once Mary slid into bed, my attention came to bear on her and there was never a moment when I thought I wouldn't get together with her if given the chance (this was karmically necessary for the scenario to play out as it was meant to). But there was no choice, so what were the two paths?

I next thought the paths might be related to how the two of us dealt with the situation. Does she leave her husband, disrupting the kid's lives and the husband's life and possibly kicking up more damn karmic dust than one could imagine, or does she "do the right thing" and abstain, leaving us a bit scorched but still relatively karmically unscathed?

For me, again, there really wasn't much of a choice. It was totally her decision.

Given the fact that the experience was an obvious no-win situation, another possibility popped into my mind. Maybe the paths had to do with what I would do *after* Mary was no more. (Note: This possibility is interesting. I will address it in the next chapter.)

—The experience with Mary was a good thing on a lot of levels. One of the biggest surprises, though, was that it allowed me to see in me how

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28 Remember the words she said that morning as she and Terry were crawling into bed—"You have no rights!" That was true throughout.

29 They said, if you will remember, that someone would come when I was established, and that she would be "at my level." That could mean anything. For this experience, I took it to mean "established at Poly" and "at my level educationally." Mary may *not* have been the individual they were talking about, but she sure seemed to fit at the time.

people can become so angry and bitter with the way life has treated them that they can hardly *not* strike out. And following that line to its natural conclusion, I got a chance to see how a chela, with all the sensitivity and power and wisdom that comes with a Being at that level, could have life lean on him or her to such a degree that he/she breaks and fails and, in the worst case, moves from the Brotherhood toward the Dark Side. At certain points along their path, chelas, by their very nature, live on the edge. As much of a contradiction as this seems, in a spiritual sense, it can be a very dangerous place to be.

—I observed something I already knew, but not at a gut level. Any E.PHIL book worth its salt will tell you that you have to deal with the situation in which you find yourself in the *here* and *now*. If you don't, you will have to deal with it at some later time . . . maybe even lifetimes later. This was a great example of *a lifetimes-later* kind of a thing.

—I knew the truth all along. I knew Mary needed to deal with her situation where she was instead of running away from it to be with me. I didn't tell her that, though. I selfishly didn't want to present her with any idea that might deter her from me.

What was important to see in this is how easily *self-involved interest* injects itself into a personal relationship. On a certain level, it is almost as though the child self *can't* be completely honest with the object of its affection because it wants certain things so desperately that it can't make itself act completely noble if doing so might instigate the losing of what it wants.

I can now understand why some people believe that lovers can never really be friends. There is always that personal-self struggle. "Do I do what's good for me and my desires, or do I do what's best for my love?" The truly loving situation motivates a person to the former choice, at least most of the time. But if there is not a truly deep love between the two people, or if the situation is driven mostly by a personal-self's convenience or perceived necessity, or if there is a loving history but in this lifetime an individual is so totally self-involved that he or she can't see passed the small self, then the latter prevails and at least one of the individuals in the duo ends up having a very rocky experience.

Translation: It's easy to see why being a true celibate is so important for someone who is dealing with the opposite sex on a spiritual, *service to humanity* level.

(I can also see why little girls and young women from normal homes

love their dads and often want to find someone *just like him* to marry. In the best-case scenario, he is completely devoted to her without a single thought that doing so might bring him something back in return. It is love without strings.)

—Every time I had a major wave of emotion flow through me, it was painful but it evaporated when I saw what there was in the experience in the way of a mini-enlightenment for me. Once seen, the pain receded and I felt uplifted.

What was surprising, and a bit irritating, was that the feeling of relief never stayed. I would feel good about things, then within a day I would feel miserable again. I would see what new thing there was to see in this new misery, be uplifted, then within a day I would be back in the dumps again. It was a lot like having bad diarrhea. You cramp, you strain, you dump, you feel better for a time, then you cramp and start the process over again. It's a gross analogy, but it's right on target in a descriptive sense.

In short, this wasn't like the North Hollywood High experience I talked about in the E.Phil book where once I realized what life was trying to tell me, the cloud lifted, all was well and I went merrily on my way. This situation was deeper, more complex.

—As I said to Cathy at one point, "This whole thing has been a finely tuned, perfectly orchestrated karmic dance. Damn!"

—Karma drew me into this impossible situation, and karma drew me out of it. There was no need to struggle because karma was going to push me in whatever direction was right. Lamenting and daydreaming about what might have been was a waste of time. There was only *how it is*, and that was set by my own karmic necessity.

If I am to come into contact with someone I might love, be it Mary or someone else, it has to be right. And if it is right, it will come . . . guaranteed.[30] This is not fatalism. It's just that it has become vividly clear that

[30] One of the things I talk about in the E.Phil class is *karma*. As best I can see, karma has two modes of action. There is what I call the *freewheeling mode* in which an individual has the latitude to go in any way he or she wants, and there is the *restrictive mode* in which karma more or less herds you toward a situation with which you need to deal. Even in the *restrictive mode* you have freedom of will, but when karma is active in this way the *range* of choices you have is limited. It is as though karma builds fences that more or less guide you toward an experience. Try to push out of the situation and the fences will push back on you. Using your freedom of will, you can choose to force passed the fences. But if the

the only thing that is assured is that karma, in concert with my own High Mind, will move me into the kind of experiences I need. How I respond *once I'm there* is up to my child-self, which is to say *me*.

—What was interesting about the little enlightenments I had along the way was that none of them were intellectually based. They all had to do with coming into realization at a gut level—seeing important things as they existed inside me.

—One of the things I noticed and wondered about was whether I was really in love with Mary or just in love with the idea of being in love. I don't have the answer to that one, given the fact that we were never physically together. I can see, though, how easy it would be to enter a marriage thinking you were in love only to find that what was driving you had nothing to do with the person you married.

—I witnessed how thin my patience can be when things go bad, how little things I'd normally stick with to completion become great, emotional stresses if they didn't work out immediately.

—I found that in the grip of true-life drama, I completely lost the urge to watch TV.

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experience is something you need to have on a deep, inner level, sooner or later that action will cause additional karmic reactions that will create still higher, stronger fences, and then you will have to deal with whatever it is that karma is pushing you toward. Karma is not here for your pleasure. It is here to help move you toward becoming a more spiritually sound Being.

On a personal level, I can't tell you the number of times during my life that life has pushed me toward actions that have kept me out of very serious trouble. I've additionally seen it in the lives of others. In my fraternity in college, I as an active was given the opportunity to mentor a pledge. The mentee was called a "pledge son." There was a pledge (Jim Herman) who ask specifically for me as his pledge dad. He was a tough kid. He was also a very good football play who'd had the experience of having me fake him out of his shorts during a pick-up football game he was in before he pledged, so he knew about me. At one point, being a hometown Phoenix kid, he was supposed to go to a party with his high school friends one Friday night but didn't because he had run into several huge assignments for school and didn't have the time. At the party, his friend got into a fight and managed to kill someone (like I said, he was a tough kid). If he had been at the party, he undoubtedly would have been in the fight and on Saturday morning would have been in jail with his friends. He wasn't. Some people might say it was just dumb luck. I don't think so. I see the hand of karma here . . .

—I realized how difficult it is to walk away from the emotional investment one makes when one "falls in love," even if it isn't a soul-mate kind of situation. If nothing else, this makes it easier for me to understand why a person who is in a bad relationship, but not a horrible relationship, might keep trying to make things work.

—I realized how much people hurt in this world. I didn't know how emotions can be so close to the surface that they can well up into tears in an instant from just a word, and how hard it is to analyze a situation when in a state of high emotion.

—I remember at one point wishing I could just go to sleep. It put me in touch with all of the people who didn't want to feel pain and who reverted to drugs or alcohol or whatever to lessen the pain.

—I thought about all the people who had spent serious time with someone they loved only to have that person die. I can now better imagine how terribly lonely it could be when one has wrapped one's life around someone—a wife or husband or lover—and then that someone is no longer there.

—And boy, where those dreams I recounted at the beginning of the chapter every dead-on.

THAT'S IT . . . almost!

This last bit of amusement is off the wall, but it's interesting so I figured I would end with it.

Mary was very wrapped up in her church. At some point, she said that part of what confused her about me was that I didn't seem unsettled by the fact that she didn't think like me—that she didn't, for instance, believe in reincarnation.

The observation kind of fascinated me (that, and it made me realize how differently I viewed the world, relative to your typical westerner). What I told her was the following.

If you were born in Northern Ireland and your parents were Catholics, there is a decent chance you would live out your days as a Catholic. If you were born in Northern Ireland and your parents were Protestant, there is a good chance you would live out your days as a Protestant. Going in a completely opposite direction, if you were born in Saudi Arabia, there is a good chance you would live out your days as a Moslem.

Whether you think it happens by design or freak chance, your birthplace, your parents, the societal experiences you grow up with, they all imprinted on your brain and affect who you think you are, and how you will most probably live for your entire lifetime. But as these characteristics differ from person to person, or for a given person from life to life, they are really superficialities. They are predicated on where karma puts you when you come into a body.

Your race, gender, sexual mindset, the religion you adhere to, they are all happenstance that can change with the wind (or, at least, with rebirth). Consequence? I'm just not particularly pushed by them.

In any case, that was the story of Mary.

One last thing: If you've read the E.Phil book, you will probably recognize a modified, disguised version of this story in Chapter 16 (Relationships and Karmic Knots). As I point out in that chapter, many use the idea of karma as a rationalization to stay in a bad relationship. Indeed, if you have a karmic knot with someone and karma has drawn you into contact with the individual, you will probably have trouble extricating yourself from that individual until the knot is untied. Then again, there are situations in which karma is freewheeling and you are moving solely under the impetus of your own personal needs and necessities with no personal "knot" present between you and your paramour.

The sticker is that you will never be able to tell the difference between the two situations. All you can do is take the advice a friend once gave to me: "Do the best you can do, then leave the rest to God." It was his Christian way of saying that there is always something higher at work "out there," and that it will take care of you if you make the effort to take care of yourself.

Chapter 15

Musings 1
The Long Path and the Short Path,
Does Karma Have a Sense of Humor or What?
and Lady Stuff

This chapter and many that follow are devoted to the bits and pieces of stuff that haven't fit in anywhere else, but that I've wanted to say something about, anyway. Some of it has to do with the Brothers and the philosophic view they brought into my life. Some of it is obscure, off-the-wall fun. Some of it is a reflection of what-all I've learned about my child-self and, by extension, the world. All of it will be, hopefully, entertaining.

One way or the other, each vignette will be prefaced by a bracketed preamble that sets up what is to follow.

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[*Karma, What a Kidder*]

Not to beat a dead horse (again), but if you will remember, the Brothers told me two things having to do with past relationships I'd had with females. In the first, they said that in the future I would be coming into contact with someone I had a karmic connection to, someone *on my level*, and that when it happened I would have to decide whether to take *the long path* or *the short path*. In the second, they talked about a life I'd had in Italy where I'd become a Franciscan monk to spite a love interest I thought had done me wrong. The consequences of the karmic mess that came out

of *that* episode were outlined in last chapter.

What was interesting was that at least part of the reason why things didn't seem to add up when I first tried to make sense of the situation with Mary was that I assumed that she was the same individual in both scenarios. If that was the case, why *wouldn't* the long path be *us getting together* with the short path being *us not*?

The problem with that line of reasoning, as I pointed out earlier, was that there was no choice for me to make inherent within my interaction with her. She was the alpha and omega when it came to decision-making. I was just along for the ride. So what the hell was this *long path* and *short path*?

In hindsight, I can see that my stalwart adherence to the conclusion that she was both women stayed with me until considerably after the fact. In fact, it wasn't until years later that it finally dawned on me that she was, indeed, most certainly the Italian woman but maybe, just maybe, *not* the individual for whom "the long or the short path" applied. As my life hasn't yet ended, I am still not sure about this point, but that isn't what's important here and now. What's important is that back when I was trying to make Mary into both women, a number of lines of not altogether unreasonable thought and insight (some of which was not predicated on the two-in-one assumption) dropped on me. Because they were educational, I'm going to recount those lines of thoughts below. This is not a waste of time. There is some very interesting stuff about karma and chelas coming.

First, it didn't take a rocket scientist to deduce that if Mary and I were going to move into the relationship we found ourselves in, it was important that I be attracted to her in the first place. So when she hopped into bed with me that morning, if that little devil on my shoulder hadn't existed and hadn't whisper, "Go ahead, roam around a little," I'd have never allowed my hands to go exploring. And if I hadn't done that, I would never have forged the link that was so necessary if karma and the two of us were going to deal with that nasty little knot that had been created earlier in Italy.

What this means is that if I had succeeded in stamping out of me the desire to have a sexually based relationship—translation: if I had succeeded in becoming a full-blown celibate during my time with the Brothers—I'd have never made the moves I did with her. And if that hadn't happened, that *other-than-friends* connection that was needed for the two of us to dissolve that karmic knot would never have been formed.

Put differently, for Mary to have the opportunity to pull the life out of

that enormous thought-form she created in the Italian life—something she had to do if the two of us were going to unlock and resolve that spiritually debilitating karmic mess we'd gotten ourselves into—it was important that I *not* master the celibate life while I was around the Brothers.

In short, though it wasn't obvious at the time, Mary's success was predicated on my *failing* the celibate path. The sexual response had to be there for us to get together in the way that we did.[1],[2]

On a lighter side: If you think about this, at least in a cosmic sense, we are looking at a situation that is kind of funny. I'd been beating my head against the celibacy wall the entire time I was with the Brothers, oblivious to the fact that karma was never going to allow me to succeed. Because if I had, my experience with Mary would never have happened . . . and that was something that, for my own good, *HAD* to happen.

It was from *that* observation that I concluded that karma has a sense of humor, and that it's as impish as is my own.

_____x_____

[the *Long Path* and the *Short Path*]

The second point of order, which also presented itself during the time I thought Mary was both women, piggybacks nicely onto the *you're going to fail the celibate path, and it's for your own good* situation. Expressing my thoughts as they stood then: *The Brothers told us that a new chela will often take two or three lifetimes before he or she fully realizes that there is*

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[1] This connection was crucial. I can't tell you the number of times I thought about canning the whole affair only to have the vivid remembrance of Mary's breast in my hand stopping me dead in my tracks. Without the sexual side of things, I'd have ended everything way before she had the opportunity to make her choices.

[2] Minor note: As I pointed out a few chapters ago when I talked about Rolf's being able to see where I was most probably going in my life, this does not mean that predestination is a reality. Again, karma sometimes draws a person into circumstances in which the latitude of the individual's *freedom of will* is restricted. Nevertheless, *freedom of will* still exists for the person. In fact, I could have made all sorts of decisions, not only in earlier lives but in this lifetime also, that could have taken me down an entirely different path with respect to Mary. I didn't do that, though. I had a huge set of backlogged events that placed me where I was. It was from that point that karma took up the reins. When the Brothers talked about Mary (without naming her), all they were doing was following my *probable lines of karma* as those lines were set at the time.

no longer the need to hold onto old patterns.[3] This was a little confusing to me at the time—how could a chela *not* see that old patterns were something that could be slough off when no longer needed—but this was the *key* (or so I thought) to the *long path* and *short path*.

During my life with the Brothers, every time I tried to step away from the sexual response, some amazingly sexy female would present herself and I would completely lose concentration. This wasn't the female's fault, it was just me not being ready to stop resonating around females. As irritating as it was to my self-esteem (nothing like trying to follow a "noble path" and failing miserably), it was a hallmark of my existence during my time with the Brothers.

In looking back, it is clear that karma rigged things so skillfully that there was no chance Mary and I would ever get together. So once the episode (complete with sexual tension) ran its course, it was at least *possible* that there was no longer the necessity for me to hold on to that sexually driven mindset. Sure, there could still be another karmic situation I might need to attend to with another female in the future, so thinking about females as sexual creatures might still be something I needed. But if that wasn't the case, I might *still* hold onto the mindset, not because I needed it to accomplish some karmic task but, rather, because I had become so attached to the thought-forms that swirl around the sexual energies that I *COULDN'T* let go!

If I kept the thought-form of *wanting a mate* around me even when there was no longer a karmic necessity to hold that pattern, there was a good chance that karma would respond at some point and I would end up with a mate. Even if it didn't happen here and now, my being attached to that desire would surely roll over into the next life.

That would be the *long path*.

As the Brothers said, it would not be a bad path. It would just be me not wanting to veer from the course I'd spent so much time pouring energy into in this lifetime.

In summary, the *long path* in that scenario would have had nothing directly to do with the way I dealt with Mary. It would have had everything to do with how I dealt with life *after* Mary. And in that line of reasoning, the *short path* was the scenario in which my child *was* willing to give up the dream and move on . . . just like the chela who *didn't* take

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[3] This isn't that hard to believe if you think about it (which, apparently, I hadn't done at the time). Consider parents who, have made decisions on behalf of their kids since the kids were babies, aren't able to let them go when the kids grow up . . . Same thing!

several lifetimes before realizing that it was possible to fully proceed.

As an additional note: You'd think this earlier, supposed enlightenment about *the long and short path* (which may or may not be on-target with respect to Mary but had some interesting thinking involved in any case) would have motivated me at the time toward stepping away from females altogether, but to do so would seriously underestimate the more self-involved side of my child-self, not to mention the fact that realizing one has the possibilities of two paths doesn't necessarily mean one is able to follow either with equal ease . . .

What's more, there was still a place in my life for "getting involved with a female" that didn't go beyond my simply being horny. Karma, as always, had something to say about such things. You will hear more about that with time. And what *was* the *long path* and the *short path* all about? All things considered, I'm still not sure.[4]

Now, more stuff . . .

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[This preamble is generally true for the rest of the book: The Brothers stressed that a lay chela is, in cosmic sense and when all is said and done,

[4] With the passage of enough time, this has changed and the reality of the *long path* and the *short path* has finally come into focus (I think). A little chronology is needed to understand how. After Mary put an end to our initial two-month long joust, she doubled down on her marriage by having another baby with her erstwhile husband (an intelligent way to refocus, kind of!). She stayed with him (the husband) for several more years until he became abusive toward the kids at which time she divorced him. Once divorced, she re-approached me. I, at the time, had a girlfriend (ahh, the timing, and how interesting a twist *that* was in a karmic sense). My girlfriend relationship was short-lived, but it was enough to put Mary off. She didn't want to be alone in life so she made contact with a man she had known years earlier who was quite a fine fellow and who she knew liked her, and the two ultimately got married. Toward the end of his life, she once again contacted me. Throughout this entire time, I was more or less still in *moving in whatever direction karma seemed to be pushing me* mode, but by the time that last round of contacts happened I had migrated to a mental state in which I was willing to be friends but no more than that (the option wasn't open to be more, but if it had been I don't think I would have taken her up on the offer).

In short, given that the *long* and *short* paths were a part of the Brother's answer to the question, "Do I have to get together with this woman I will be meeting," it seems obvious that my first estimation was right on. The *long path* was me sooner or later getting together with her; the *short path* was me not. What was surprising was that karma seemed to continually step in to make our union unlikely, which makes me think the *short path* is where I have been meant to go all along. At this point, I'm completely comfortable and good with that . . .

no better than anyone else. Everyone is where they are in their attempt to move upon the spiritual evolution that underlies this place. No individual is more important than any other. No individual is more blessed. No individual is special. We are one family. If one fails, we all fail. We are in this together.

Everyone has experiences in life. What's important is what you do with those experiences. A skeptic could read all of this and conclude that I'm just a normal guy who is a little bit introspective. Big deal! What is important to note is that although few of my life experiences have been unique, I have had my perspective focused through a lens informed by my contact with the Brothers. In other words, my life experiences haven't been outside the norm in most cases, but what I've perceived through those experiences has often been extended.

What has guided my life to date, and that I'm kind of expecting to answer in this book, is, "How might someone trying to follow a spiritual path deal with *life in the trenches*?" I haven't exactly excelled as an exemplar in this regard, but it is still a question I am at least somewhat qualified to answer as that seems to be what my life has geared me to do.

Put a little differently, if, as you read the following half-dozen pages, you decide, "This guy isn't any great shakes," I wouldn't disagree. Kindly push through and read on, though. There is more on the other end that is interesting. And with that, onward.]

[Ahhh, sex. You want to get someone's attention, talk about sex. There's a lot more to be said about the topic beyond what you are about to read, but I've got to start somewhere. Note: whereas I'm re-reading and altering this section in late 2014, it was actually written in 2006.]

[Since Mary and my slow reintegration into being a little more mainstream than I was when Kay and the Brothers were around, I have had several opportunities to, how shall I phrase this, *bed willing females*. In all instances, I have managed to find something about the individual that has sabotaged the moment. Just as was the case when I was young, I seem to be amazingly picky as to who I might mess around with. This would have been reasonable if I had been a good-looking guy. Perversely, I am not.

The few times I have found someone of interest, the individual has been uninterested in me, has already been in a relationship or has had some impossible distraction happening in her life. It would be nice to believe that karma was being protective of me, keeping me from accumulating

needless karma through personal relationships I didn't *really* require, but I have no idea if that was what has actually happened.

Ignoring that head-scratcher, sandwiched between Mary and now (now being 2006) I have run into some females I have become smitten with. For all sorts of reasons, none of them have worked out. Each has, nevertheless, brought me some level of minor enlightenment. I've included two below that were particularly educational.]

This first experience happened when my neighbor to the south, Julie, tried to set me up with Betsy, a nurse she knew.[5]

A week before the date, I had two dreams that didn't fit into the standard mold but that had significance.

In the first, the linoleum in my kitchen was pealing up. It looked awful, so I began to help it along. As I did I thought, *I can redo this mess in five days*. (Five days from the time of the dream was when my blind date with Betsy was to be.)

The second dream had me looking at a room in which the floorboards had been removed and the under-beams were evident. A number of them

[5] Odd, and very off-the-wall, but Julie's house, the one to the south of me, has a very interesting pedigree. The first people I remember living there were Lily and Allen. I mentioned earlier that Allen had played *the soul* in Kay and Cathy's "The Egyptian Book of the Dead" production. Both Lilly and Allen were "dressers" in the Hollywood of yesteryear and, as best I could tell, were good to the point of being sought-after by "the stars." Lily was a sprite of a woman who had a temper that far surpassed my mom's, and Allen was a giant of a man who was regularly cowed by Lily. Allen was also a survivalist. He once spent four days driving a converted half-track—an Army half-tire, half steel-tread vehicle whose treads had been removed and replace with tires—at 25 mph to Arizona to use on his squatters-claimed copper mine. He was the one who told Kay that when the revolution came and the blacks in northern Pasadena came rampaging down into the white communities, we all could get on his roof and he'd protect us with his 50 caliber, World War II machine gun. Years ago, they sold the house to Bill and Yoli. Bill was a Vice President at Warner Brothers (amazingly, the house is, as was Kay's and now mine, relatively small—not what you'd expect of a movie big-wig). When Allen found this out, he put an eleventh-hour stipulation on the sale of the house to the effect that Bill would accept a script that Allen had written (this, with Cathy's help—Allen was nearly illiterate) with the understanding that Bill would "give it to the appropriate person at Warner Brothers." As Bill was in marketing, he had no idea who to give it to, so when he agreed and the manuscript showed up on his doorstep a month after he and Yoli moved in, he dutifully gave it to a janitor at Warner Brothers with the instructions to deliver it wherever the man thought it should go. Bill and Yoli lived in the house for several years, then sold it to Julie, who is my current neighbor and the owner of Julienne's Restaurant down in San Marino. Julie is a very nice woman and a pleasure to have as a neighbor. No machine guns, just good food whenever I help her out with something. That home has had quite an interesting array of individuals live in it!

were pivoted out of place. I pushed one of them back into place with my foot before I awoke.

The two dreams seem to be saying that something about my under-structure (my thinking) was amiss, but that I was going to have the opportunity to fix it. In fact, my child-self immediately thought, *oh, boy, maybe I am going to get a girlfriend*, though how I surmised a girlfriend out of the symbolism of the dreams I'll never know. (It does, nevertheless, says quite a bit about what the lesser side of my child-self seemed to be focused on during that time.)

The date itself happened in Hollywood. We had dinner, then went to see the movie *The Village* at the Cinerama Dome. Betsy was a very nice woman. Unfortunately, when she was not animated she reminded me a lot of the stereotypical spinster. She was my age, more or less, but she had a stern countenance. I could easily imagine her telling a doctor off if he did something stupid. She had long hair in a ponytail, but it was completely gray. She had bangs that had gone completely white. She had a small mouth and chin that seemed pinched, and she had a wattle on her neck. Her demeanor was not the smooth grace that comes with women who have had a lot of experience with men, though maybe I was inferring too much from her natural sternness.

On the upside, when she'd smile she would throw off twenty years and I could see that she had been quite cute when she was younger. Also, she had gone to Woodstock with her brother when she was nineteen, so she couldn't be too big a *stick in the mud*.

The date went fine. At the end, she gave me a full-on body hug that was kind of off-center. As such, I had the thrill of coming into very snug contact with her large, full, firm right breast.

Damn! Breasts again.

As I was going home, I thought about the evening. It had been fun, but she looked old and, as I said, a little pinched, which is to say, *she probably looked a lot like me*. I (my child-self) nevertheless felt weird walking down the street with an "old woman" as a date. (Again, this says a lot about my child's state of mind at the time.)

In addition, as horrifically superficial as this is going to sound, I also knew she wasn't the one I wanted to present to the Poly community as *the woman I'd decided to get together with after twenty-five years of celibacy*, should I come out of the dating closet and actually show up at a Poly function *with* someone.

You'd expect my course of action would be obvious, given what I've said above. It wasn't. There was something there I wasn't seeing, something I couldn't put my finger on, something that kept me from closing the book on her even though I knew there was no future there.

I talked to Julie about it hoping she might shed some light. She didn't, though she did maintain that the woman deserved another chance.

As I've moved through life, I've come to see that if there is an experience that won't resolve itself in my mind, there is always something in the experience I haven't understood but need to come to grips with (you may remember a quote from the Brothers to that effect). As soon as I see the bit of wisdom hidden at the heart of the discomfort holding my attention, everything changes and my focus on the circumstance just vanishes. This situation was no exception.

It took three days of intermittent meditation (not to mention requesting help from my High-Mind) before I finally understood what there was for me there. What I realized was the following: I was around 25 years old when I pretty much went cold turkey on dating and overtly attempted to excise my sexual response. I don't know if that produced a kind of arrested development in me or what, but on a fairly subtle level my focus over the previous few years (i.e., after Mary) had *not* been to find someone I was well tuned to, or someone I might be happy spending the rest of my life with, or someone "on my level" intellectually, comedically, athletically, . . . whatever.

It hadn't been evident to me until that morning, but the underlying reason for my urge to look around for a woman those last several years—*a reason I (my child-self) had very cleverly concealed from my conscious thinking*—had been that I was horny and wanted to once again experience the sexual *give and take* that happens between a guy and a gal in serious heat. In other words, my child-self wanted to again experience what it stepped away from thirty years earlier. Attractive women who were 25 to 30 years old turned me on when I was *leaving* the dating scene. It wasn't surprising to find that *older* women, whether they be attractive or not, *didn't* turn me on "now" (sophomoric, but not rocket science). My having trouble dealing with Betsy's relative oldness had solely to do with what was motivating me in the first place (i.e., wanting to get laid by someone I found attractive).

Fortunately, I was fully aware that taking someone out that I knew I wasn't going to stay with for any length of time simply because I like her

breasts and want to have sex with her was not right. Betsy, I'm sure, would have liked to have had a relationship. She might have even enjoyed a roll in the hay, but above all else, she would have wanted something to come out of the contact beyond a brief statement to the effect of, *on behalf of me and my dick, I'd like to thank you*.

In other words, not only did my motivation stink (all as a consequence of a couple of years of subliminal stink), where *I* would be going with a second or third date would not be anywhere near where *she* would be going, and that was not something I was willing to do to her.

And as a small addendum, right after the meditative revelation, I began thinking about truly stepping away from dating altogether. I was quickly disabused of *that* idea later in the week when I went to see my lawyer in downtown Pasadena. As I was waiting for an elevator to go up to his office, one of the elevator doors opened and out stepped a very pretty, very shapely young woman. Every fiber of my being went *BOING*. This problem was not solved.

NOTE, and for me *the main point of interest*: In the previous vignette, karma was (as always) very clever. If Betsy had been knockdown beautiful, breasts and all, I probably would have melted into one of those mush-minded states that seem to characterize guys "in love" and would probably have made an effort to create a relationship with her without much additional thought.

That wasn't what karma wanted me to do. Indeed, there had to be something there that caught my attention—those breasts, to be specific—but there also had to be something amiss about her that put me in the position of having to decide to heartlessly take advantage of her or not. Karma, I suspect, was banking on my unwillingness to do the latter, and on my tendency to introspection. My first reaction was to take her out again, but why? That Goddamn right breast! I knew something was wrong with that plan, but it took me three days of considerable mental discomfort before I settled down to see what it was.

Karma knows how to work its people, and its focus is always to make the self grow. That, and I still think it has a sense of humor.

There was one other female situation I will include here, primarily because there is an observation I made during that process that I enjoyed writing about.

The secretary at my dentist's office was named Anne. She was very

pretty and quietly sexy (nice body). She was about ten to fifteen years younger than I, and she seemed very sweet . . . though in my state of relative fogginess, I might have been wrong on that count. To make what could be a very long story short, I wanted to date her but found by talking to my dentist by phone that she had a long-time boyfriend.

I have to say, THIS SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN A SURPRISE. When I was thinking around the possibility of taking her out, I simply couldn't see karma—more accurately, I couldn't *feel* karma—moving me into a personal relationship like this, especially one with this drop-dead desirable woman. Doing so would have reinforced way too many qualities in me that didn't need reinforcing at the time. If there was one thing I'd learned, it was that karma has very different views of what is good for me than does my child-self.

Anyway, even though I knew down deep that this wasn't going to work and that, in fact, it probably *shouldn't* work, you'd have thought from the reaction of my child-self to the dentist's information that an intense, twenty-year relationship had just ended abruptly. I immediately focused into the aspect of myself that is self-involved, and I was devastated.

In looking back, though, it was laughable. I went to bed early because I just didn't want to be conscious. I couldn't go to sleep, thinking about all of the experiences, from sex to just plain camaraderie, that I wouldn't be experiencing with this (assumed) delightful creature. I felt weepy. I felt alone. I snarled at my cat when she went through her usual meowing at night, wanting me to sit down and watch TV so she could curl up in my lap and go to sleep. I felt that the world had nothing of interest left in it for me, a feeling that reminded me very much of the way I had felt when I was in high school and college and had broken up with a girlfriend. I was experiencing what hundreds of thousands of Americans, not to mention, most probably, millions of other humans, experience every day, but at the time I just didn't care. It was *me* that was hurting.

I, a small self in the face of the cosmos, had been abused by life. That's what it felt like. I woke up several times that night and grieved for my loss . . . *COMPLETELY IGNORING THE FACT THAT THIS WAS A WOMAN I HAD NOT SPOKEN MORE THAN A-HUNRED-AND-FIFTY WORDS TO IN MY ENTIRE LIFE*.

I saw everything as darkness . . . completely forgetting the fact that I had wisdom beyond most, that I still had good friends even though they weren't immediately evident, that I had a job most teachers would kill for, that I still had my health, more or less, and that on the whole, I'd experi-

enced very little in life that I hadn't been able to turn into some level of understanding.

At various times within the next day, I had tiny glimmers of insight shine through. At one point, I found myself amused to note that the knee problem I was having could be the consequence of a metastasized melanoma and I could be dead in a year. I also noted that since I'd bought Kay's house, I had little money left over at the end of the month to do much of anything; that even though my car was about to give up the ghost, I still didn't have the money I'd need to get a new one; and that I was sporting a body that frequently produced a whole lot more pain than anyone in their right mind would want to bear.

Yet with all of those potentially devastating problems to worry about, I'd chosen to focus my attention on the fact that I wasn't going to have the opportunity to wine and dine a pretty woman *I HARDLY KNEW*.

As for more profound insights, at one point I took time to project my mind out in meditation, touching all of the people on this continent who were going through a relationship crisis. The pain was incredible, but I felt closer to a huge portion of the population as a consequence of the experience.

I also got another shot at understanding people who were generally angry at life.[6] I could see in me how the child gets when it thinks life is being unfair. I could feel the depression—the just wanting to die—and the fierce impulse to strike out. I could *feel* how the perpetually angry view the world. It wasn't an easy thing to look at (again), but it was a good thing for me to see.

Lastly, given the time I'd spent trying to better understand how thought-forms act, I saw something that was interesting. When I first started my meditation, I noticed how extruded I was, how *out there* my self had become. I found that when I pull my focus back inside me, the tone around me completely changed and all of the depression, all of the pathos, all the self-pity, all of the anger evaporated. It was as though the reaction I was having wasn't based solely in me but was really, primarily coming from somewhere *out there* in the inner worlds.[7]

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[6] I'd observed this through the *Mary* experience, but one of karma's more useful tools, at least in a teaching context, is forgetfulness. It was important for me to see the situation again so as to more fully impress its importance upon my self.

[7] What may have been happening was that because I was mildly upset about the turn of events, I inadvertently linked myself to the extremely potent inner-world thought-forms of sexual rejection and disappointment, and the experience mushroomed to the point of temporary insanity.

I don't know how to explain the extricating feeling other than saying that it was a centering of the self, a focusing of the self here and now. It reminded me of the quote from the teachers: "The only place you will ever be is *here*; the only time you will ever have is *now*; and the only person you will ever have a true control over is *yourself*."

The focusing helped make me sane for a time, but after I left the meditation and let myself flow back into my normal state of mind and all of those associated thought-forms I'd attracted and entertained, the trauma re-established itself.

It was all quite fascinating. Anyway, that was my experience, such as it was, with Anne.

My elbow-rubbings with the opposite sex since Kay died (again, this was written in 2006) haven't always been fun, but they have been uniformly enlightening. They have always allowed me to see things about myself and life that I needed to see. They have, in short, been very good for me.

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[Another, related topic: There was a period when I was really interested in the sentiment, "How, oh how is karma going to help me pull away from being so focused on having a girlfriend . . . assuming that is its intent? I want to know. I really do want to know!" As life proceeded, I got glimpses. The aftermath of Anne was one of them.]

Always my friend, I retreated to meditation about my weird reaction to Anne considerably after everything died down. What I saw about myself was, again as always, quite enlightening.

In the past (all the way back to when I was a kid), when I'd become interested in a female, I'd mentally rush at the woman filling all the *space* in my mind with thoughts of nothing but her. Companionship, fun times, sex, it would all be there and all I'd think about, crowding out all else. It was strangely pleasurable, but at the same time it was cloying. And when things would go wrong, everything would collapse in on itself and there I'd be, left with all that space filled with nothing, the emptiness showing in vivid detail, the void feeling immense. With that, my child would grieve.

It took quite a period of meditative effort to percolate, but I finally came to see that although the space was always there, *not* filling it in that way was *not a bad thing*. In fact, it was very nice having space within the

self that was available for use, that could be cleared at a moment's notice to be used in whatever way I chose.

In the Tao Teh Ching (Mackintosh's translation), Lao Tsu says:

The thirty spokes within the wheel unite upon a hole;
Yet but for that which none can feel, how could the carriage roll?
From damp clay molded into place a vessel may be wrought,
And yet without the space within its value would be naught.
Tho' wood and tile may build a hall, and roof it with a dome,
It is the empty space within that makes the hall a home.
And so from vessel, hall, and wheel this truth we may deduce;
To what existence renders real, its opposite gives use.

I see kids who can't handle having an hour of free time—they feverishly try to fill the empty space in their schedule (and their mind) by doing something, *anything*.[8]

I see adults who live for their kids, or their job, or their *significant other*, or their chosen video game, so much so that there is little free, empty space inside their world. When the kids leave home, or they lose their job, or their significant other somehow departs, or the internet goes down, the resulting emptiness is a horror (well, maybe not for the internet problem, but for everything else).

At one point or another during my lifetime, I have seen all of this happen inside of me.

With friends, there is not the mental rushing that comes with a dependent relationship. One isn't obsessively devoted to one single person, so it is possible to go out and have fun with a wide range of people . . . or just sit quietly with nobody. Having space within the self—space in a psychological and emotional sense—that is a real boon even if the child-self

[8] When was the last time you saw a kid, or anyone for that matter, walk down a street without having a cell phone stuck to their face?

doesn't see it as such.[9]

The point: Over the years I have worried and wondered how karma might wean me from this strong sense of urgency that my child-self has had concerning *having someone special in my life* (this, assuming it was not actually appropriate in a karmic sense for me to *have* a girlfriend). The Brothers once said I had a problem with attaching myself to women. I thought they were talking about Kay and Cathy, and I thought they were wrong. I now see they were talking about personal relationships with women in general, and they were right.

What is nice is that through experience, I've come to appreciate the space within that comes with not having someone to focus on in my life. In doing so, I have learned how to be *with* females without focusing *on* them so. That, of course, doesn't mean I might not fall off the wagon and become enthralled with a female sometime down the line. It is nevertheless an observation that is worth honoring even if I don't entertain it always.[10]

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[9] Interestingly, what I've called the *space within* is very similar to what psychologists call *bandwidth*. Both are related to a person's capacity to think clearly about more than one thing.

[10] How wonderful it will be to have earned through effort and the balancing of karma the peace that comes with not feeling the need to attach the self to another in a personal way, when one can work with someone they are attuned to and maybe even love without the pulling and tugging that comes with the desire to "be closer." How wonderful, unless in doing so one loses *sympathy for* and *awareness of* the myriad of human Beings who are constantly in that state.

I am toward the end of my life, and just recently I came into contact with a very young woman whose tone and demeanor I felt strongly attracted to. Given the age difference, this was so, so inappropriate, yet in a cosmic sense *so needed*. Why? Although it was truly momentary, I had *forgotten* about the deep melancholy that comes over the self when it finds itself separated from the object of its affection, whether it be reciprocate or not. I had *forgotten* how sadly alone the self can feel after it has had a taste of harmonious companionship, then lost it. I had *forgotten* about the length to which the self will go to bring that other closer, and the sadness it feels when it fails. And I had *forgotten* how icy a woman can be when her feelings are hurt. I can imagine a time when I'll no longer need to experience these feelings, but that time is not now. This was a good thing. *I needed to remember.*

And for the record, ignoring the fact that since I've had my prostate removed my plumbing hasn't worked worth a damn (so the chances I will have sex with any female ever again in this body is exactly *zero*), this experience was not about me being sexually frisky. This was about me resonating with very human conditions I needed to think about.

Also, I so find the workings of karma interesting, even if I can only see it in retrospect. This was a time when I needed to have that *space within* that I talked about *EMPTY* because I was just finishing up Volume 1 of the book, and necessary changes and additions were coming screamingly out at me beyond the norm. I don't know if these revelations were

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[One last thing: This is about one of the stranger things that has motivated me toward females over the years.]

This is very much an aside, but it is something I find interesting. One of the things that has motivated me to action all of my life, especially when it has come to women, has been a strong abiding fear that I was going to miss out on something. It's almost as though I'd had a life in which I had an opportunity to be happy with someone, didn't take a chance and approach the person, was lonely as a consequence, then at the end found out that I could have made the connection if I'd just made a move when the opportunity presented itself. I can't tell you the number of females I *made* myself approach as a kid, not because I had any good reason to believe that they *were* interested in me but, rather, because there was a slight chance they *might* be interested.

This may not be all that unusual. And, I guess, given the fact that getting shot down is no fun, the urge to stay quiet isn't so irrational, either. After all, you never really know what is going on in the mind of someone else (I, for instance, had no idea Mary was feeling the way she evidently was feeling before she presented herself under the guise of a pre-dawn prank). Still, what has motivated me more often than not with respect to women has been a fear that if I was a shy violet, I might *miss out* on an experience that would be enjoyable.

This fear dovetails into another interesting aspect that I've notice my child-self seems to entertain, an aspect that I think is a big part of being a human being. It is the desire to expand outward beyond the bounds of my small self. This, I have noticed, is overwhelming in me. It was what motivated me to learn more about physics and history, what grabbed me when computers first showed themselves in the world, and what has nudged me toward finding more and more exotic ways to educate my students.

One of the cosmic imperatives is growth. There is a real blissfulness in growing beyond one's self. It has been one of my great pleasures.

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solely mine or I had help, but having that space clear was paramount. If karma hadn't rather cleverly contrived the events that ended my plans with that female that summer, I'd have filled that space with thoughts of her (as innocent as they would have been), and that is not what I needed . . . so events happened. I do marvel at how karma works.

Chapter 16

Musings 2
Perspective, God and Babies

[This is a continuation of my look at disparate topics. As before, a bracketed explanation of what is to come precedes each section. As you can tell, the chapter is primarily focused on *perspective*. The first section is designed to show you how quietly and completely your perspective shapes your world, and most of the remaining sections are dedicated to the various ways karma has let me see into the perspective of others without anchoring me to those perspectives permanently. So here we go!]

What do you think of the equation 1+1=10?

Most would say *nonsense*! Any small child knows that *one* and *one* is not 10 . . . except this may not be as nonsensical as is seems.

When you and I learned our numbers at an early age, we did so in what is called a *base-ten* system . . . a system in which the symbols 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 are used. In that system, anyone wanting to write a number larger than 9 must use two or more of the acceptable numerals in conjunction with one another. Example: thirty-two is written 32, which means there is nothing in the *hundreds-column* (see the first table), a 3 in the *tens-column* and a 2 in the *ones-column*.

10^2	10^1	10^0
hundreds	tens	ones
0	3	2

What many non-math types don't know is that *base-ten* is not the only base system around. For instance, computers are built on a binary, *base-two* system in which the only acceptable numerals are 0 and 1. If you and I originally learned to write numbers in binary, we wouldn't see anything wrong with 1+1=10.

How so? Whereas the number 2 in <u>*base-10*</u> (see the second table) has nothing in the *hundreds-column* (10^2), nothing in the *tens-column* (10^1) and a 2 in the *ones-column* (10^0), *table three* on the next page shows the same number written in base-2 where (again) the only acceptable nu-

10^2	10^1	10^0
hundreds	tens	ones
0	0	2

2^2	2^1	2^0
fours	twos	ones
0	1	0

merals are 0 and 1. In that case, there is nothing in the *fours-column* (2^2), a 1 in the *two's-column* (2^1) and a 0 in the *one's-column* (2^0).

Bottom line? The original assessment of "nonsense" in the *1+1=10* example was predicated on a very basic assumption nurtured by our *perspective*. You and I learned the numerics of *base-ten* when we were kids. We assume all addition is done in *base-ten*. So if we were to run into something like *1+1=10*, we would assume faulty arithmetic, not the possibility that this was a legitimate arithmetic operation that just didn't fit into our view of the world.

It all has to do with *perspective*.

(Note: In mathematics, the confusion is circumvented by subscripting . . . a number "2" in *base two* is really written as $(10)_2$ . . . but that doesn't diminish the point being made here.)

Bottom line: Our view of the world is based on assumptions inherent in our perspective. If any of those assumptions are wrong, our view of the world is not going to reflect the reality of this place and, as a consequence, is not going to allow us to make perfect sense of this place.

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[This concerns some people's puzzlement over the idea that *the existence of God* is not something that can be intellectually proven. Again, perspective has a lot to do with whether this is sensible or not.]

I said in the Preface that upon reading this autobiography, my dad asked how I knew all of what I had experienced wasn't some kind of giant illusion. My response to him was that early on in my life, I had thought about that possibility.

My conclusion? I acknowledged that I didn't know anything for sure, but that as long as my path led me to becoming a better person and didn't do any harm in the process, I'd continue on until inconsistencies arose that led me to believe that I was deluding myself.

In the Preface, I also said in a footnote that if the view of life I had lived by for so many years was a true reflection of reality, this inability to know for sure was expected—that for very good reasons, *not knowing* was pretty much hard wired into the system.

That was something else that peeked my dad's curiosity. He wanted to know *why* I was so sure that not knowing about the existence of God was reasonable.

The gist of what I told him follows.

Let's assume what the Brothers have said is a true and accurate reflection of reality, where (of the many possible paths) might this lead us?

If you are normal, you will tend to associate yourself with your body, but that is not what you are. You are an Awareness, a Consciousnesses that is clothed in physical form for a very specific reason. You are learning how to deal with *existence in matter* (and specifically, at the human level, with *the creative energies of God* and *freedom of will*). What's more, the form you sport to do that is very different than that of your *natural state*.

What's important to understand is that the idea behind this exercise is not simply for you to become "good" while in a body. The exercise is for you to come to a point where you are good because, through experience, being good is the only way you *can* be. It is the difference between someone who listens to music and someone who actually *creates* music.

Your ultimate goal is to become spiritually skillfully in the ways of the world. There certainly are Consciousnesses in the universe that are powerful enough to swamp humankind with thought-forms that would simply make people good by divine directive,[1] but that would defeat the purpose. Consciousness—you and I—have to develop these qualities within ourselves out of the stuff of our own experience. Only in that way do we grow into something more than we have been, and only in that way does the Mind of God grow.

If this is the case, if you and I are evolving Consciousnesses, it would make no sense for "the system" to include within itself a proof that God existed. Because if that were the case, child-selves like you and me would, upon learning of the proof, simply, superficially, mindlessly adhere to the *edicts of God*, mimicking spirituality instead of actually growing into spirituality.

In short, there is a very good reason why proving the existence of God in an intellectual sense is something people will never be able to do. Doing so would completely defeat the purpose of this place.

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[1] If this view of the world is a reality, a Being like a Christ could have easily done that.

[Since the Brothers, I have had a strong feeling that one of karma's goals for me has been to experience little *peeks* into the world of others (I obliquely alluded to this earlier). To that end, none of what I have run into has been to excess. I have had girlfriends, but not always. I have had money, but not always. I have felt comfortable in my world, but not always. I have felt pain, but not always.

I am not suggesting that I am special or unique in this regard. All I am saying is that through the little looks karma has brought me, I have been able to see some of the states in which other people spend whole lifetimes of involvement.

What follows are a few examples of what I'm talking about.]

Imagine what it must be like to descend into Alzheimer's disease, a situation in which you slowly lose control of your memory. I've had that thrill.

Several years ago, over a four-day period, my memory almost completely vanished. I knew who I was and I knew where I was, but I had no idea what I had done ten minutes previously. I would go to a movie and, by the time the trailers had ended, wouldn't be able to remember what the trailers had been. I'd get sidetracked during a discussion with someone, then not be able to remember what I was saying when the sidetrack concluded. I wouldn't be able to remember what I had for dinner the night before, or for lunch a few hours after noon. I even pulled out of my driveway one evening only to sit in my car in the middle of the street for thirty seconds, trying to remember in which direction I had to proceed to get to my favorite restaurant.

My memory was gone.

Interestingly enough, none of this particularly worried me at the time. I don't identify with my body, so when it doesn't work right I don't really freak out in the way many people might. I wanted to get back to being normal, but on the whole, in looking back, I treated it as something to marvel at more than anything else.

I finally asked Brian for his thoughts. He suggested trying the herb Ginko Biloba. I had absolutely no confidence that an herb would make any difference at all, but what did I know. Maybe it would work.

Within two hours of taking the first two tablets, my memory was back to near full strength.[2] Being the idiot scientist I occasionally am, I then

[2] Oddly, Bryan was skeptical about this immediate relief, believing that it was a placebo effect, because the herb is not supposed to work that fast. He seemed to have changed his

stopped taking the herb to see what would happen. Sure enough, within a day my memory disappeared again. I then started taking the herb once more. My memory came back, but only to about 80% strength. It was around that time that it struck me that playing with this was really stupid, so I migrated back to taking daily doses and kept my scientific nose out of it.

I went to the neurologist assigned to me by my insurance company. She had no idea what was going on, so she sent me to a specialist. The specialist sent me to another specialist, who sent me to the guru of all specialists, a doctor at UCLA Medical Center.

I was given all sorts of tests. In the end, the UCLA guy told me that I had a healthy brain but that there was something amiss in my frontal lobe. He then proceeded to tell me that modern medicine really knew very little about the frontal lobe, that almost anything could set it out of whack thereby creating the problem, and that he had no solution to the problem.

At least he was honest about it.

As I said, during the year or so that I took this medical sojourn, absolutely none of it upset me. I knew I had an Alzheimer's-like problem, but I viewed it as a kind of adventure. It was the way I was. It was interesting to observe. I accepted it without emotional trauma.

I don't know if it was my attitude or the Ginko or what, but within two years my brain more or less re-wired itself. At this point in time, I have minor memory problems appropriate for my age, but on the whole I am back more or less to normal.

And what did I learn? The most interesting observation was how powerfully my memory forms the context through which I live my life. Not knowing where you have been in an experiential way really gums up your view of where you are going. I suspect hundreds of thousands of Alzheimer's patients are having to deal with a similar revelation *for real* in a setting in which there is no road back outside of death.[3] I was fortunate to have seen it, then been able to step away from it.

The second part of this section has to do with a problem I never

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mind, though, when he heard the rest of the story.

[3] This is changing in the sense that there is lots of medical work currently being done in an attempt to mitigate this problem. My experience happened before all of that, though, so the power of the experience wasn't dampened at the time by hopes that medicine would "find a cure."

thought I would experience when I was young, that of depression.[4]

Until just a few years ago, I would occasionally get tension headaches. They could be fairly mean, but two aspirin and a very hot shower directed on the back of my neck would usually put an end to them.

Recently, another kind of headache has sprung forth. What's been different about this new type is that attached to it has been the decidedly unpleasant presence of a state of depression. Aside from being very uncomfortable during the events, *this has been absolutely fascinating*.

I have always considered depression to be a state people psychologize themselves into when their child-self wasn't happy with life. I still think dissatisfaction on the part of the child-self is the root-cause, but that doesn't alter the fact that I never understood the mechanics of depression—how you could be perfectly happy, at least on the surface, and then just like a light switch being turned off, your brain chemistry changes and you are in the depths of an attack.[5]

According to the neurologist I talked to, this new kind of headache I was experiencing was a *migraine*. No matter what it was called, it was uniformly unpleasant. As it approached, my brain would dull down (this was how I could tell one was coming—my brain would kind of go flat before the pain hit). I wouldn't want to do anything, just sit. Nothing, not even the old standbys, would excite me. Goals seemed unattainable. I didn't want to be around people. I was totally in-turned. I felt I would never get out of the morass.

In short, it was just like having someone put the mental equivalent of a very heavy, thick, wet wool blanket over my head, and that's where I'd live until the Alleve would kick in and the pain would go away. Once the pain was gone, it was just like another switch was thrown and I was my old self again.

Millions of people throughout the world experience not only migraine headaches but also full-blown depression every day. I've had the opportunity to see what their lives are like (a different perspective), but I've been given the additional perk of not having to live with the problem for more than a short time. Again, karma has let me see something about the travails

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[4] Yes, I know, this is not a barrel of laughs. I'll make it short. It was educational for me, though, which is why I'm including it here.

[5] Current research suggests that classic migraines may be more of a brain-wiring thing than a chemistry thing. By the way it acted, I'm convinced that what I had was a chemistry thing.

of humankind without having to dedicate an entire life to the proceedings.[6]

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[Babies and another perspective thing.]

What am I, really? Looking at things from a cosmic perspective, I am not a male. I am not white. I am not middle class. I am not a physics teacher. Indeed, I have animated all the thought-forms that go with those roles this time around, but the roles are not me. Next time around I could animate a woman's form. I could be black or Latino. I could be super-poor or super-rich or just financially mediocre. I could be completely unemployable, the CEO of a Fortune 500 company or just a guy who does an uneventful, mundane job all his life.

Having observed that, two things that do *not* leave me when my body dies are my *ability to be aware* and *my past*. When I come into the world next time around, both will still be with me. Put a little differently, if, as the Brothers have said, reincarnation is a reality, when I next come into the world as a baby, I won't be doing it with a clean slate.

A baby's body, in still other words, is a new vehicle *for a self that has existed in a body before*. No, it is not a carbon copy of the self's previous personality (Beings are vast—each life focuses on a particular aspect of the self). And no, the baby won't consciously remember their past lives (that would defeat the purpose of this place). But a baby is a Being with a past, with karma, with skandas (tendencies drawn from previous-life efforts). Freedom-of-will notwithstanding, a baby's body houses a Consciousness whose path this time around has been at least partially formed by its own actions in previous lives (hence the Brothers' obversation that *you are your own parent*).

What's more, a biological parent is a child's temporary guardian, that's all. It is an honorable and important endeavor (the Brothers once said that one of the greatest travesty possible was the mistreatment of a child), but it is not a defining endeavor for either the parent or child. A

[6] Interestingly, I've been taking a tiny dose, about a tenth the norm, of a seizure medication called Topiramate, and haven't had a headache for five years. I can feel sometimes my scalp tighten the way it used to do when I would get a headache, but the depression doesn't come, and neither does the pain. I used to think that using medications was not something I should do, but the Brothers pointed out that there is nothing wrong with taking a medical treatment that karma has brought you into contact with if it helps you function better.

child should be nurtured and sheltered and raised as best the parent knows. Setting a tone for a child is important. But there are children who come in with strong tendencies of their own, tendencies that no amount of parenting will squelch.

This could be for good or bad. There are children who survive and succeed even though they grow up around drug-addled adults in the darkest of ghetto circumstances. There are children who manage to run amuck even though they are born among God-fearing and/or high society types. In short, a child's path can be affected by the parent, but there is more going on than *just the parent*.

The moral of the story is this: Don't judge the parenting skills of others too harshly, especially if you observe a child out of control. Indeed, the parents may be to blame. Then again, those parents may just be dealing with a child whose background is strong and obstreperous. However it be, know that if you mindlessly judge, there is a very good chance karma will draw you into experience from which you will see the situation from the other side of the fence, so to speak (and we're back to *perspective*). In that circumstance, it may look as though *you* are the bad parent.

In short, *judge not . . .*
The first will someday be last . . .
Sound familiar?

_____x_____

[This is the last of the *perspective* thoughts. It deals with adversity.]

I have no words to express how often my emotions have clouded my execution of what I am about to say, but here are a few things I've noticed when dealing with other people.

First, no matter how irrational someone's actions may seem, nobody does anything that doesn't seem sensible and right to them in their own mind. Understanding that, one of the most useful tools I've run into in dealing with people is the ability and willingness to take the time to look to see what the other guy is seeing. When I do that, I invariably deal with the individual in a more compassionate and thoughtful way, and my expe-

rience with them is not usually filled with anger.[7, 8]

Second, when I get wrapped up in a policy dispute with people at Poly, I am usually fighting for what I think is best for my students. It is gratifying when I succeed in these disagreements because I can usually see that a certain amount of travail and/or damage is going to be circumvented.[9] Nevertheless, I have lost a fair number of these skirmishes. And when that happens, because I care about my people, it is always traumatic.

What's interesting is that the inner turmoil ceases if I remember that everyone has a karmic path that is appropriate to them and, who knows, maybe it is appropriate for my students to *have* the tougher life the policy will inevitably bring.

Put a little differently, it is karma's task to mold the circumstances of an individual's life (in conjunction with that self's Higher-Self). If I can be of service to that end, great. But if, in trying, I do not succeed in lightening the load, that should not ruin my day. I'm best off when I "do the best I can, then leave the rest the God."

Third, the actions of others will hit a nerve in me only if there is a dissonant point in me that resonates with the action. If this happens, no matter how much my child-self wants to focus on what an asshole the other guy is, my irritation won't truly go away until I look more closely *at myself*. This is not a linear process, but I believe it is characteristic of all evolving humans. As Lao Tzu said in the Tao Te Chang (Bynner's translation):

> A sound man is good at salvage, at seeing that nothing is lost.
> Having what is called insight, a good man, before he can help a bad man, finds *in himself* the matter with the

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[7] The classic problem with this is the situation in which the individual's motivation is murky—being selfish or just plain mean spirited. Understanding where someone is coming from has to be tempered with loving compassion. Otherwise, it will eat you up.

[8] Given the dishonorable, supremely self-serving manner in which our previous President (Trump) conducted himself during his four years in office, there was a period of time when I found it hard not to think of Trump's supporters as just plain stupid. That really wasn't fair. After thinking about it some, and considering the steady bombardment of pro-Trump propaganda that both he and Fox News blanketed them with, the emotion I finally settled on was to just feel sorry for them in a kindly way. This wasn't me being patronizing. This was me honestly and sincerely feeling bad for fellow human beings.

[9] Interestingly, the arguments of late have been more along the lines of trying to keep the school from pampering the students too much.

bad man.
Whichever teacher discounts this lesson is as far from
the path as the other, whatever else he may know.
This is the heart of it.
_____x_____

[Last gasp: I removed the preamble I recently wrote for this chapter because I decided it (the preamble) would overshadow the content of the chapter, and I didn't want that to happen. Still, what was presented in that preamble is interesting and kind-of important, so I'm sticking it here at the end, slightly modified, where it can't do too much harm. I might add, there may be other places in the book where I talk about stuff like this. If that be the case, my apologies for the redundancy.]

Most of what you've been reading was originally written in the early to mid-2000's. This chapter focuses on the idea of *perspective*. It is now July of 2024. I am re-reading Volume 1 for the last time before attempting to produce a hardcover book. The problem is that some pretty far-reaching stuff has been happening in our nation in just the last few weeks, and it has made me wonder if anyone a few years down the line will even *care* about the governing topic of this chapter. This preamble will highlight what has been happening, shotgun style. It will end with comments about following a spiritual path in times like these. Here goes!

—At this point, Donald Trump is almost assured to beat Joe Biden for the Presidency in 2024 (remember, this was written early July, 2024).

—It shouldn't be surprising to anyone with a pulse that the United States at this point has a two-party democratic political system in which one of the parties no longer believes in democracy (restricting voting rights, for instance, is not the action of a democracy-loving party, and the Republican leader, Donald Trump, is most certainly an authoritarian wannabe). The alternative? The love affair Republicans seem to be having with the autocrat Viktor Orban of Hungary should tell you something about the direction the party would like to go.

—For those of you who don't know, autocracies are essentially dictatorships that come about when a charismatic, cult-like leader (Donald Trump?) takes over a country's institutions (as versus having the take-over being the consequence of force).

—The single biggest fear autocrats have is that when they leave power, they will be prosecuted for the plundering of their nation.

—One of our institutions, the U.S. Supreme Court, is currently populated not so much by judges but rather by right-wing conservative activists bent on tearing up the political and social landscape (the repeal of Roe; the repeal of the Chevron Deference), and many of their decisions seem to be grooming our nation for autocratic rule. How so? By ruling that a President has nearly absolute immunity for his or her actions while in office, they have given Trump, should he be re-elected, an assurance of cover for anything he might do (an autocrat's dream). All that is missing to complete the coup is for Donald Trump to be re-elected (which may or may not happen--one never really knows in what direction karma will move).

—The autocrat's playbook dictates that once in power, an autocrat and his (or her) cronies will use the country's institutions to tighten their strangle-hold on religion, the press, education, the lives of its citizens and any business dealings that might enrich them. While Democrats in recent years have worked to win public opinion on issues, Republican strategists have cleverly focused their efforts on seizing the levers of power through court appointments and legislative gerrymandering (Trump alone appointed 3 of the 9 Supreme Court justices, 54 of the 179 U.S. Court of Appeals justices and 174 of the 667 U.S. District judges, and if you think this kind of thing doesn't matter, it was a Trump-appointed U.S. District judge who dismissed the very damming, pretty much air-tight Classified Documents case against him for no good reason beyond having the power to do so). If Trump and his loyalists manage to gain complete control of the country, they will undoubtedly pass laws designed to allow Trump complete freedom to go in whatever direction he chooses (again, an autocrat's dream). This would undoubtedly include the jailing of anyone who opposes him (a desire Trump alluded to several times after his 34 felony convictions earlier this year), the deporting of all Hispanic immigrant illegal or not, and the demeaning of anyone who isn't your standard, straight, white, Christian nationalist. The fundamentalist Christian crowd that supports him will undoubtedly agitate for restrictions on the education of our young (we already have a Florida's law that effectively eliminates in schools a meaningful discussion of race, racism and privilege) and the banning of books (even without a national ban, the conservative right managed to institute bans on 4349 books in the U.S. between July and December of 2023, with 3000 of them happening in Florida alone). (And not to sound paranoid, but if book banning becomes institutionalized, given Trump's paranoia about

criticism, there is a high probability that the book you are currently reading will become banned and possibly illegal to own.)

—Ignoring all the peripheral chaos being instituted by Republican state legislatures (bans on gender affirming medical treatment, bans on book, bans on what can be taught in schools, bans on medically-necessary abortions), if Trump wins the White House, he will have the power to do anything he wants (due to the Supreme Court immunity decision), much like Putin in Russian, Lukeshenko in Belarus and, yes, that darling of the Republican party, Orban in Hungary.

So what do I have to say about all of this? This is the Kali Yuga, the age of iron, the time of choosing. The Dark Side is currently doing its best to create havoc and chaos in our country. There are darkly tinged players in our midst. Karma is giving them voice. There are many Beings animating bodies in our country right now who are on the edge of *the deep sleep*. It is their time of choosing. If enough of them heed the siren song of the Dark Side and our country goes down the tubes (at this point, that is not assured, but if it happens), the *perspective* you animate will have a lot to do with how you come out the other end. Don't be complacent, act as powerfully as you can, but don't be so attached to your view of the way things should be that you afford karma no leeway. Things don't happen for no reason. Again, Lao Tzu:

Yield and you will not break; bent you can straighten.
Empty you can hold, torn you can mend.
And as want can reward you, so wealth can bewilder.
Aware of this, a wise man has the simple return that other men seek;
Without inflaming himself, he is kindled;
Without explaining himself, he is explained;
Without taking credit, he is accredited;
And because he does not compete, he finds peaceful competence.

Find peaceful competence. Understand your fellow man (and woman). Help where you can. Don't despair about things you have no control over. There is no death. Do the best you can; leave the rest to God.

(And again, for the record, a Trumpian take-over is not assured. If it is not karmically correct, karma will move and *something* will happen to spike his guns. We'll just have to see how things shake out.)

Chapter 17

Musings 3
His Holiness, the Dalai Lama

[Off in a little different direction, and SURPRISE, this has to do with the Dalai Lama.]

In my E.Phil. book, *Eastern Philosophy for Western Minds, A Search for the Jewel in the Lotus*, I talk about the unusual experience I had during my first encounter with the Dalai Lama. It was, I think, during his first speaking engagement in Los Angeles back in, I believe, the mid 1970's to early 1980's. I am going to recount that story below as written in my E.Phil book because it is interesting and because it says a bit about my early life with Kay and the Brothers.

First, the E.Phil story (remembering that my students didn't know anything about my connection to the Brothers):

> In the early 80's, the *University of Oriental Studies* in Los Angeles invited the Dalai Lama[1] to come and speak. I

[1] The Dalai Lama is primarily the political leader of Tibet, although he is also very much a spiritual leader (the primary spiritual leader is the Tashi Lama). Both the Tashi and Dalai Lama are believed to be reincarnating Lamas, or *tulkus*.

Historically, when such a Lama dies, a search is immediately launched to find the new child into which that Lama has reincarnated and become. The search can last many years with the Tibetan people and monks looking for a baby with the correct birthmarks. Once found, the child is put through a series of tests. The protocol is rigorous. For instance, in looking for the Dalai Lama, the hereditary toys of previous Dalai Lamas are mixed with numerous other toys, then presented to the child (if you saw the movie *Kundun* about the life of the Dalai Lama, you saw this tradition animated). If the child picks out the hereditary toys, he is allowed to continue with the tests. If he fails, the search is resumed.

Tenzin Gyatso is the fourteenth Dalai Lama. When the Chinese invaded Tibet in the 50's, he escaped (the Tashi Lama was captured by the Chinese; God only knows where he was taken or what they did to him) and established a Tibetan *government in exile* based in Dharamsala in the north of India. He is a very benevolent man who loves so deeply that he stands whole heartedly against violence, even against violence that if carried out might free his homeland (his kindliness, I'm sure, is a considerable source of irritation for the Chinese government). He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990.

knew very little about the man at the time, but my friends and I decided it would be interesting to hear what he had to say. [Note not included in the E.Phil book: We were additionally pretty sure he was a part of the Brotherhood.]

We went in my car. [Also not mentioned in the E.Phil book: We got a very late start due to Kay's propensity to be chronically late. It was so bad that when Kay and Cathy would travel, Cathy would tell Kay the plane was leaving at 3 PM instead of the real time of 6 PM because doing so would mean that she—Cathy—wouldn't be a basket case by the time they'd get to the airport. I'm mentioning this because I was driving and was feeling very much responsible for getting the group to the gathering on time.] The freeway was unusually difficult that day. We arrived late [not surprisingly, given Kay's propensity,]. I was quite tense from the drive and apprehensive about getting a place to sit. We were lucky enough to find seats up high in one of the side balconies.

When he arrived on stage, the Dalai Lama stood behind a podium. Ten or twelve Tibetan monks sat in chairs on the stage to the right and left behind him. He began to speak in fairly good English. As he talked, it became evident that his sense of humor was warm and pleasant. He said things that were thoughtful and kindly but not unduly moving. Still, he wasn't halfway through his presentation when I started to feel, well . . . different.

Even if I had known more about who the Dalai Lama was, I would *never* have expected the tone of my thoughts to have altered as radically as they did as I sat there watching him in that auditorium. The pettinesses of my habitual nature, the self-imposed pressures of the day [again, not a part of the original transcript, but these were HUGE given the need I had felt to get the group there on time], the psychological tensions that go along with living, they all receded. It was just as though the lesser side of my *child-self* simply went to sleep, leaving me in this extraordinary, freed state.

. . . And it had absolutely nothing to do with what the Dalai Lama was actually saying. His message was

clear but not novel; his presentation was OK but not stellar. What made him different was his presence. It was as though he bathed the audience in a meditation of peace, amplified by the collective mental presence of his accompanying monks. It completely took me by surprise.

During the three days that followed, the effect lasted uninterrupted. I viewed life with a kinder, calmer, more complete eye. I found it easy, even natural, to act with compassion in situations where I would normally have become defensive and/or aggressive. I found that time was enough; that I could do in peace what was needed even in circumstances in which I would normally have felt pressured and rushed. I was able to perceive what was important in the sense that I could look into the heart of a situation and find the bit of wisdom that was there, even in situations where emotions would normally be high. My mind was cleansed of the clutter of trivial expectations and desires, which is to say that I could see with clarity through and beyond the emotions and dullness of my small self. The *tone of myself* was simply different.

The more I say, the more I realize how inadequate words are to describe the immensity and depth of the experience. What I can say is that it was blissful and that it lasted in full bloom until the morning of the fourth day at which time it faded, leading me back to being "normal." [In fact, I'd gone to visit my dad, was staying in one of his guest cottages and remember distinctly waking up that morning and watching, over a two-hour period, my slow transition back into being my old self.] I don't know who else reacted in that way, nor am I completely sure why it happened to me (if this view is correct, it could have been a karmic giftie simply designed to allow me to understand that other states of being exist). What I do know is that during that period I was profoundly different from my normal state of life, and that the experience could only be characterized as enlightening.

I have since heard the Dalai Lama speak alone (i.e., without attending monks) twice. Neither time did I experience the effect, which makes me wonder how much

the other monks contributed to my response the first time around?

_____x_____

What you've just read is what I said about the incident in the E.Phil. book. Expanding, when we got back to Kay's, after the fact, I discretely asked and found that nobody in my group of compatriots felt the effect. And although I certainly didn't mention this to my kids when I retold the story, between you and me I am sure there were chelas in his entourage at least one of whom directed thought my way. (Kay said she could tell that several of the lamas who backed him had *a lot of juice.*)

This was clearly a situation in which the Brothers were allowing me to see what life looks like from the perspective of a fairly advanced Being. It was a gift for me and me alone. It was something I needed to see and feel, given the work I was intended to do with students during the course of my life. It was a bit like the feeling I regularly had when listening to the Brothers in the small meetings, but magnified by a thousand. It was, in short, amazing.

_____x_____

[Considerably after my original encounter with the Dalai Lama, I had another unusual experience associated with him that wasn't at all mystical but certainly was whimsical.]

By the 1990's, the Dalai Lama had received his Nobel Prize and was well known even beyond people who were interested in Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. He would periodically visit cities within the United States. My home, Pasadena, California outside of Los Angeles, was one of his standard stops.

I don't remember the exact date, but he had a three-day long public audience at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium one year. During his stay, he focused the discussion on things he thought were important and answered questions from the audience almost nonstop. I had friends who went for the entire time. I dropped in only once one afternoon. When I got there, he was responding to a question about being a vegetarian.

As I listened to him talk, I realized that the idea of not using animals for food was something he had thought a lot about and something with

which he had struggled. Culturally, Tibetans are not vegetarians. If for no other reason, their home, at least before the Chinese took it away from them, was located high in the Himalayas where vegetable gardens were and are, I suspect, uncommon.

As he continued, it dawned on me that I had a very nice, data-complete discussion of the topic of vegetarianism in my E.Phil book. Thinking that at least someone in his entourage might find the raw information in the book useful, I flagged down one of the Tibetan ushers as I was leaving and asked if he thought the book might be something the Dalai Lama would like to have.

He said he thought the Dalai Lama would appreciate having the book, and to please bring one. That I did, leaving the book with that same Tibetan later that evening.

That was the end of it or, at least, so I thought.

About two weeks later, I got a call from a man who identified himself as the man who cooks for the Dalai Lama when he is in Pasadena. He said that the Dalai Lama had told him to contact me and ask to buy one of my books. (I deduced that the guy didn't have much money so, as I remember, I sent him a free copy.)

He gave me the information I needed to send him the book, but before he hung up I asked him how all of this had come about.

He said he had been sitting in the living room of the Dalai Lama's hotel suite, and on his coffee table sat my book. He had picked it up to read while waiting, and when the Dalai Lama came in His Holiness suggested that he get a copy, if for no other reason than to see what westerners (or, at least, some westerners) were thinking.

I couldn't imagine the Dalai Lama taking the time to actually read my book, so I asked the man why he didn't just take the book that was there.

His response was, "Oh, I couldn't do that. It was the Dalai Lama's book."

In other words, evidently, somewhere in India right now in the possession of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, there is a copy of my book.

Put a little differently, if I happen to reincarnate as a Tibetan monk any time soon, there will be my book, waiting for me in the Dalai Lama's library.

You gotta see the amusement in that . . .

Chapter 18

Musings 4 Family

[Dad died]

It's November 25 (Thanksgiving), 2004, and about two weeks ago, my dad died (Sunday, November 14, 2004). It happened just as he would have liked. He felt crummy for a couple of days. A neighbor, Carole, took him in to the Emergency Room in Scottsdale, Arizona. They told him he had a heart aneurysm and said he needed an operation. He initially said "no" but finally agreed on the condition that if he died on the table, they would not try to revive him.

Two hours later, he simply stopped breathing.

He didn't want to be poked and prodded by doctors. He didn't want to be infirmed and bed ridden. He didn't want to be a burden to anyone. When it was time to go, he wanted to do it quick and clean. That's exactly what he did.

I will miss him, though not in the emotionally intense way that is characteristic of most people who lose a parent. I was fortunate to have had him as a friend.

(It's four years since I wrote the material above: My dad used to watch the *McNeil-Lehrer New Hours* every evening. When I would visit him during Christmas and during my summer vacation every year, we'd sit side-by-side in the two recliners he had in his living room and watch that TV news show every night. I stumbled upon it just a few days ago while channel surfing, and I'll be damned if it didn't take me right back to sitting next to him, watching that show. Let's hear it for nostalgia, and it *is* remarkable how the brain works.)

_____x_____

[A bit of background about my sister.]

My sister is a basically good person with a good heart. She was

adopted by my Mom and step-dad when she was six months old. Oddly enough, I was the only one who could get her to stop crying and fussing when she was a baby. I'd just pick her up and she'd quiet right down.

Unfortunately, because I was thirteen years older than she, I really didn't bond with her much. In fact, she was just starting school when I left for college. The consequence was that although she seemed to feel very strongly about me, I never felt really close to her. It wasn't as though I didn't like her. It was more that I didn't feel that strong brotherly attachment that probably would have been there if we had spent fifteen years together fighting and competing and doing all the things siblings that are closer in age do with one another.

_____x_____

[Mom died]

On the same day of the year, exactly two years after my dad died (i.e., on November 14, 2006), my Mom died.[1] Several months earlier, she had awakened from a pleasant night's sleep with a pain in her hip. Being the stalwart soul that she was, she assumed that it was just another sign of old age and ignored it. Unfortunately, it persisted getting progressively worse with time. She finally told me about it. I told her to go see a doctor.

One of the nice things about the retirement plan she got from working in L.A. City Schools was free health care with Kaiser Permanente for life. After several weeks of waiting for an opening, she finally got in to see one of their doctors. He ordered some tests and scheduled a MRI. The doctor's diagnosis was arthritis. He prescribed painkillers and ordered her to begin *physical therapy*.

The poor thing went to physical therapy for several weeks until it became clear that the exercise was only exacerbating the problem. She went back to Kaiser and again, after a wait, had another MRI.

The doctor said he had never seen anything like it. In the three months between MRI's, the ball-joint in her hip had almost completely dissolved. Mom either had a raging infection or cancer.

At this point, she was in a lot of pain but still able to hobble around. She really had no choice. She had taken on the task of raising my sis-

[1] This led to some whimsical speculation on my part that *maybe there is some kind of genetic clock-thing going on here and on November 14, 2008, I would die*. Wouldn't that be a hoot! (Later note: It's December 23, 2008. Evidently the hoot is not to be had.)

ter's six-year-old daughter, Lorraine, who was a terror and needed a strong hand. At 83 years of age, mom just wasn't about to slack off from her self-assigned task of raising that child.

This was good and bad.

Mom had supported Patty for years. When Lorraine was born, she became a part of Mom's family, too. The three subsisted on Mom's retirement money with occasional infusions from me.

Patty was an excellent commercial cook, so mom moved the family several times trying to find a place where Patty could get work. In each city, mom would buy a house (over the years, I lent Mom upwards of $50,000 to do this). They lived in the Laughlin area, in Las Vegas and in Lake Tahoe, all places where there was a tourist trade and a need of restaurant services.

Patty never held a job for long. It wasn't entirely her fault as most of the jobs she was able to land were seasonal and she'd get laid off when things would slow down. She was also bipolar, though, and had begun self-medicating with drugs at an early age. By the time she was in her forties, she had already been in jail once in Lake Tahoe for drug trafficking (this was how she supported her "self-medication").

In any case, Mom loved Patty dearly, was devoted to her and wanted to do the best she could for her. What she wasn't willing to do was to trust Patty to raise Lorraine intelligently. That was why she had stepped in, relegating Patty to *mother in name only*.

_____x_____

[Mom was not a member of the small, inner group, but she still met with Kay several times to talk to the Brothers. During one such meeting, the Brothers told her about the origin of her situation with Patty.]

According to the Brothers, Patty had been mom's fourth and favorite child—a son—in a marriage in England several hundred years earlier. When the father died, the title, estate and money all went to the other sons leaving the fourth son—the individual who would become Patty in this life—with nothing. Again, according to the Brothers, Mom did everything she could for the boy but he deeply resented his situation and was constantly angry with Mom for not doing more. In fact, Mom did all she could but he was so self-involved that nothing was enough.

He left home and fell into an odd pattern. He would spend periods

of time working to make money, then would travel to a small, out-of-the-way village-town and presenting himself as a minor nobleman. He would live lavishly until his money ran out, then would exit presumably leaving heavy debts in his wake.

In other words, his life was wrapped around creating a fantasy of sorts, then living in it until he was forced to flee.

As was the case in the previous life, Mom was devoted to Patty this time around. And as before, Patty not only lived in a fantasy world for most of this life, she was angry with Mom most of the time. She ran away from home when she was twelve, then again when she was fourteen (interesting, it was as though she was trying to establish a pattern similar to the one she had focused into in the previous life). She was institutionalized (this is when the bipolar problem was diagnosed), then waffled through high school dropping out before graduation. Again, she left home (this time legally) and stayed away until she was so financially strapped that she had no place to go but back to Mom again. By that time, Mom had divorced my stepdad. That was when Mom started moving around, trying to find places where Patty might find gainful employment.

All the time, though, Patty resented Mom with Mom just ignoring it, doing the best she could for Patty.

You can now better understand why Mom felt she just couldn't die yet. She knew from watching Patty in *this* life that, although Patty was a basically good person, her pattern of living was not stable. She also knew that Patty had been using drugs for years and years, and that she wasn't able to hold onto a job for long. Lorraine still had a good ten or twelve years to go before she could leave the nest and enter the world on her own.

Mom wasn't going to be put off from her appointed task even in the face of major pain.

_____x_____

[So back at the ranch:]

The doctors at Kaiser wanted to biopsy mom's hip. The only way they could do that was to operate, which they did. This was kind of a stupid move for all sorts of reasons. She clearly didn't have an infection—they'd given her all the antibiotics possible and the problem remained. She obviously had cancer and it had obviously metastasized. Nevertheless, they wanted to do the biopsy.

Five months after the first signs of trouble, she walked into a hospital, had the biopsy, came through it OK but exited the hospital to never walk again. There is nothing like putting an old body through an operation to completely debilitate it from there on. Mom spent the rest of her days bedridden.

I had a hospital bed set up in Mom's living room at home so she could spend her remaining time there. To her credit, Patty took good care of her during that period. About a month after the operation, Mom died quietly one afternoon.

_____x_____

[Some fascinating karma:]

It was interesting, as all things seem to be in my life, that karma felt the necessity to put Mom in a situation in which her unyielding devotion to Patty was challenged. Wanting to help others is a good thing, but having a slavish attachment to someone is not. I have no idea what motivated Mom lifetimes ago (as in, before the English life) to forge the bond that existed between her and Patty, but whatever it was, its effect had to be broken. The way karma did it was classic.

"You want to attach yourself to this Being?" karma said. "Fine, consider yourself inextricably attached."

When Patty started to reanimate all the anger she had felt toward Mom in the English life, Mom couldn't step away because Patty's child, Lorraine, was in the picture. Mom got exactly what she wanted, a chance to help Patty all she could, but when Patty began to act out, Mom was stuck. She couldn't step away due to the baby. She had to deal with the attachment she had fostered.

By the time Lorraine was seven and the cancer came, it was time for my mom to go. She knew it, and she was good with it. Given all she had tried to do for my sister and all the things my sister had done to show her contempt, I believe Mom had finally dealt with the inner tie she had made with my sister. She still loved her, but not in the unthinking way she had before. I remember her sitting in the living room of her Highland home saying that if it wasn't for Lorraine, she'd sell the house, give Patty some money and show her the door. In other words, Mom was so beaten down that she was ready to cut bait and run. She didn't, though. She did her duty to the end.

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[Back aways before mom died . . .]

After Patty got busted for dealing drugs up in Lake Tahoe, Mom decided to get her out of the area. So when Patty was finally released from jail, Mom moved herself, Patty, Patty's daughter Lorraine, the cats (names forgotten), Chrissie (Patty's very sweet Australian Shepard—she is in the foreground of the picture) and Wigman (Wiggie for short—he was Chrissie's hundred-pound plus off-spring who thought he was a lap dog—the picture is of the two getting ready to romp in my living room) into my house in Pasadena. They stayed there for several months until I finally told mom that something had to give. She, ever thoughtful, remedied the situation by buying and moving into a brand new, two-story, five-bedroom tract home in *the Ranch* in East Highland, California. The school district there was excellent, which was a really good deal for Lorraine.

As I said above, even though she was in her eighties, Mom essentially raised Lorraine. Patty, who at the time was in her mid-forties but often acted emotionally like a teenager, used her peripheral role in Lorraine's upbringing as another source of anger toward mom. As such, as I said, she didn't treat mom terribly well. She did very little around the house, often asking for money before leaving for several days at a time purposefully leaving mom in the dark as to what she was doing. It was not a good situation. As I said, if it hadn't been for Lorraine, mom probably would have sold the house, given Patty a little bit of money and told her to go away. Lorraine, unfortunately, made that impossible.

I don't know if it was Patty frequent absence or Patty's attitude toward mom when she was there (or, possibly, just a genetic thing), but Lorraine took it upon herself to also treat mom horribly (I saw Lorraine do this later with other people, so maybe it wasn't just mom). It wasn't unusual

for Lorraine to completely melt down over nothing of consequence, then scream at the top of her lungs how much she hated Mom (this, when she was only four or five). She would also bang her head on walls or the floor when she didn't get her way.

Don't misunderstand. Mom was no slouch when it came to dealing with kids. She'd been a kindergarten teacher for twenty years and knew all the tricks. Still, there were times when she'd call me and say she just didn't know what to do about Lorraine.

Mom's merciful death thrusted Patty into the unfamiliar role of being a full-time parent. Patty loved Lorraine, but she didn't really know how to be a good mother. (I called one morning during the school year to find Lorraine answering the call. I asked her why she wasn't in school. It turned out that she hadn't gotten Patty out of bed that morning, so there was nobody to *take* her to school. My reaction was to rather vocally informed Patty that it was the parent's job to get the kid up, not vice versa, but that didn't solve anything. Patty was too used to living in her own little world. She didn't know HOW to be a good parent.)

Having seen how both Patty and Lorraine had treated mom, I had absolutely no inclination to have the two of them move back into my home after mom died. My rather lame solution to the *where will they go* problem was to begin paying the $1400 monthly home mortgage on the Highland house so they could stay there. Patty's only responsibility was to get a job and earn enough to take care of everything else.

Mom's great worry throughout her life was that if left alone, Patty would flounder. In fact, she did. She never did get a job.[2] I think she tried,

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[2] Patty really chafed at having someone acting as boss over her. What she really wanted was a store she could call her own. Before mom died, Patty would dumpster dive behind stores like Target and the few "up-scale" boutiques that were in neighboring malls (she would also go around the neighborhood pulling aluminum cans out of the trash to redeem for cash, to mom's great embarrassment, but that's another story). She was very artistic, and when she'd find some fairly expensive item that had been broken and thrown out, she'd seamlessly repair it, then store it away in her room with the hope of someday having a store to sell it in. Mom and I decided to give her her dream, so I gave her $15,000 to open a little store in Highland.

The knick-knack shop she created out of whole cloth was really quite elegant and quite lovely. Unfortunately, the only place she could afford was in a mini mall next to a laundry mat in a very depressed neighborhood (the only area of Highland that wasn't depressed was East Highland where mom's house was, and Patty couldn't afford a shop there), so nobody in the area had any money to spend. The only money she ever made over the entire year the store was open came from me when I would go in and buy something, just to give her hope.

but nothing ever came. Finally, I suggested that she think about taking in student renters from the University of California at Redlands (it was close by). Unfortunately, the people she attracted to the prospect were "friends" who were heavily into drugs. In other words, she found renters all right, but they were real low-lifes. Additionally, it wasn't long before she was dealing drugs again herself to make ends meet.

(I wasn't yet aware that things had so digressed.)

Not even that helped. At one point, I got a tearful phone call from her saying that "they" had just cut off her electricity. She hadn't paid the bill, primarily because she had gone through the little money Mom left and was flat broke.

When the tearful phone call came lamenting the loss of electricity in the house, I responded by bellowing into the receiver, "Get a fucking, God damn job." I then said I'd help her for "just this month." Having no idea she was dealing, I put $1100 into her bank account so she could pay that month's bills.

If Patty had been alone, I'd have probably helped her out that one month, then let her fend for herself. If she ended up on the streets, she ended up on the streets. Mom had coddled her all her life. I had no inclination to take up where Mom left off, especially the way Patty had treated mom over most of her life (though as I said earlier, Patty *had* been quite good with mom during mom's last two months here in a body). Unfortunately (again), there was Lorraine. I couldn't let her dangle simply because Patty was into drugs and wasn't a good provider.

The long and the short of it was that I ended up helping Patty and Lorraine out for quite some time, paying out upwards of $2500 a month toward their existence. As of the *original* writing of this section, I was still in the middle of the hassle and didn't know how it would end. I do now.[3]

It was heartbreaking. She tried so hard; she wanted it so bad; she *was* so talented and she did create a very nice something out of absolutely nothing.

I suspect, though, that she left such a serious trail of disaffection and betrayed people behind her during that vagabond life she lived that the Brothers told my mom about, that karma had no intention of letting her up off the mat. She ended up having to close the store when the money I gave her ran out. It was very sad, but I'm afraid Patty's karmic debts were just too great! (I deduced this because it seemed that everywhere she turned, there were always roadblocks . . .)

[3] Actually, at the time, the best thing that could have happened for Patty would have been for me to have died. My estate was to be split between Patty and Lorraine, and at the time, it was worth a little over two million dollars. It wasn't as though I had access to all that money—it was tied up in my house and my retirement fund, but if I died, someone was going to get a pot-full ADDENDUM: It is amusing, writing something then going back a

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[Busted again:]

Not surprisingly, the police were well aware of Patty's activities in Highland and, finally, busted her on the evening of Friday, December 4, 2007. Around 9:30 P.M. that night, I got a call from the social worker who was with the police. She wanted to know if I would be willing to let Lorraine come and live with me more or less indefinitely.

I said no.

As harsh as that probably sounds, I was a fifty-something year-old bachelor who had never been married and had no children. I had seen how Lorraine treated mom. I knew there was no way I was going to be able to coexist with her in my house without throttling her within two weeks (not really, but close).

I also knew that she was smart and manipulative. At the time I had no evidence to support this worry (aside from a gut level feeling), but I wasn't sure there might not come a time when she might get angry over some ruling I had laid down (standard fair with kids and parents) and try to get back at me by claiming I had done something "inappropriate" to her (it would have been her word against mine, but it wouldn't have been pretty in any case). As I said, I had seen nothing that led me to believe she might do something like that, but it is interesting that considerably later in the saga she did pull a maneuver that was NOT of that ilk but was still rash and ill-conceived and did get Patty into trouble she didn't need. In short, I simply didn't trust her enough to take that chance, so I said *no*

Although I didn't know it when the call came in, the other person on the social worker's list was a woman who had befriended my mom a few years earlier. She was a good Christian, young (31 when I met her), and had two children. Way before mom's health problems arose, the woman had told mom that she would help out if there was ever a need. I'll call her Amber here.

You will hear more about Amber a few chapters down the line.[4]

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year or two later and re-read what was written. As of now, three or so years later, all sorts of hell has broken loose and some really surprising stuff has happened to me as a consequences of Patty's situation. As usual, you will read about it shortly.

[4] Although I may talk more about Patty later, I didn't want to leave you with a bad feeling regarding her. As has been obvious from what I've written, Patty's primary beef was

with my mom. That didn't mean she wasn't a good person. She regularly stood up for her friends when they couldn't stand up for themselves; she regularly helped people out with money if she had it; she was always loving toward me even though I really never did anything to deserve it; and things have long since straightened out for her on the drug scene (I'm writing this footnote in 2021, around fifteen years after the original chapter was written). In the interim, though, karma has been hard on her.

She has had boyfriends, but none have been particularly nice or stable so she is now alone. She has had friends, but most have been of the street-people type. Folks like that are so attuned to looking out for themselves, it's almost impossible to really be friends with them (any path to advantage that they see, they will take even if it means rolling right over you in the process). What's more, a few years ago while taking care of a terminal cancer patient in Bullhead City, Arizona (right across the Colorado River from Laughlin, Nevada), she was told she could continue to live in his house as long as she wished. Unfortunately, after he died his heirs served her with eviction papers thereby putting an eviction notice on her record. She paid $4000 for a 1985 mobile home hoping to live in it (which would have been ideal for her), but when she approached mobile home parks in the area she was told that they wouldn't accept mobile homes that were more than ten years old. That meant she was saddled with a mobile home she had no place to put (she finally put it in a storage area for mobile homes—who knew those existed—and used the structure as a storage unit, thereby relieving herself of the $400 bill she was paying monthly to hold onto the stuff she had from mom's house along with all the other junk she had collected over her lifetime that she just couldn't bring herself to part with). Told she was too old to get a job as a chef at the Laughlin casinos where she applied for work (even at the resort where she worked when she and mom lived in the area), she finally got a job as a tree trimmer (in her late fifties) trimming, primarily, palm trees (think about it—someone her age climbing desert palm trees to trim them . . . in 110^{o} summer weather). The owner of the tree-trimming company had contracts to do the trimming for many of the resorts, but he hired (I think) undocumented workers (also, I think he was a philanderer whose wife wouldn't put up with him having any women on any of his crews). For whatever reason, he wouldn't give her any documentation to show she worked for him, so when she would go to rental agencies to try to rent a house or apartment to live in, they would turn her down (no apparent job and an eviction on her record) . . . even with my co-signing on the lease and guaranteeing payment for the year. That meant that instead of paying $600 a month for a house, she was paying $1200 to stay in a motel (she was only able to do this because I upped the amount I was giving her monthly from $500 to $900). I offered to let her come live here (something I really didn't want to do, but I felt sorry for her), but said she'd have to agree not to bring "friends" around (I had no guarantee a friend this month wouldn't end up being an enemy next month, and giving people I didn't know access to my house through her was not something I wanted to do). I even said I'd continue giving her money each month so she wouldn't have to work, but she refused, not wanting to give up her freedom. Anyway, as I said earlier, karma this time around seemed to be bound and determined to hold her feet to the fire, and I'm quite sure it all has to do with that life in England when she as a *he* left a path of debts and broken promises in his wake because life hadn't given him what he wanted . . . and yet this time around, she is a good person . . . sigh . . .

[This is a bit off-the-wall . . .]

If you are into dark humor, there is one other thing about Mom's death that I might add. Mom wanted to be cremated. Knowing that Mom would be departing shortly, I contacted a mortuary in the area and set everything up for when she went. I gave Patty the mortuary's phone number so that she could call when the time came.

Patty had done so much in her life to circumvent taking responsibility for things that I decided beforehand that when the time came, I would let her deal with that phone call. She was the one to whom Mom had devoted her life. The least Patty could do was to make that last call.

At around 4:30 p.m. on the 14th, Patty tearfully called and left a message saying that Mom had died and that I should call immediately. I knew that if I called back, she would expect me to take over. I wasn't going to do that, so I didn't call back.

Two or three times a year I would get together with a physics-teacher buddy, Martin Kirby, who was an AP grader and who for years had used my AP Physics text with his independent study kids. He was also one of the seven or eight people in the country who made up the team that wrote the physics Advanced Placement tests. That night just happened to be the night he and I were supposed to meet at Mijares Mexican restaurant for dinner. As I had no intention of relieving Patty of her responsibility to Mom, I chose to honor the dinner-plans with Martin. About twenty minutes before I left to meet him, Patty called again. I didn't answer.

Martin and I had a nice meal. We talked about all sorts of stuff—what was happening at our respective schools, what we'd done during the summer, how his wife was. I had a thoroughly pleasant time. Then, around 7:30 p.m., I rather casually said, "Well, I'd better get going. My Mom died about three hours ago and I have to call my sister."

You'd have thought I'd hit the poor man in the cheek with a week-old mackerel. He was stunned.

I realized two things at that point.

First, he wasn't going to understand how I could be so blasé about something like my mom dying. Second, he wasn't going to understand how I could be so blasé about something like my mom dying.

I quickly tried to cover myself by explaining that I loved my mom but that it was time for her to go. I additionally said that everything was OK with me, and that my view of the world was such that death wasn't that big a deal.

I have no idea what he thought, though he was clearly confused and, I suspect, at least moderately appalled. He also kept saying, "It's going to hit you sooner or later. When it does, you can call me."

In any case, I'm sure that Mom, should she have been looking over my shoulder at the time, got a huge laugh out of it. It was just the kind of thing that would have tickled her pink.[5]

[5] I have to say, mom and I had a similarly quirky sense of humor. She gave me a birthday card one year toward the end of her life (I was in my mid-fifties) in which the central figure was an old man (representing me) in a diaper. She thought it was hilarious, and so did I.

Chapter 19

Musings 5
Physics With Calculus
and the Good Paul Hewitt

[There is absolutely nothing in this chapter about the Brothers. I had an interesting book-related story wrapped around the Dalai Lama; this chapter is focused on another book-related story, this one wrapped around Paul Hewitt, the world-renown author of the physics-for-poets text *Conceptual Physics*. Most of the chapter is a preamble to that story (I talk about the situation I found myself in at Poly that led to my book). If your brain needs a break, read it (it's fun). If you are dying to get back to the Brothers, skim it or skip it altogether.]

As I pointed out earlier, I wrote an AP physics text several years ago. At the time of the writing of this chapter, that book was being used at, maybe, twenty-five schools across the country from Hawaii to Connecticut. The genesis of the book was interesting.

When I first arrived at Poly, the books for the next year had already been ordered for me (they were the same books that had been used the previous year). The AP class was using Halliday and Resnick's *Physics*. That was fine with me. It was the book I had been raised on and was, as far as I was concerned, the best Calculus-driven physics text on the market (consequentially, I kept it for several years thereafter).

I don't remember the name of the book provided for the regular physics class, but I didn't like it so for the second year, I used Bueche's *Fundamentals of Physics*. I chose it because as far as I was concerned, it had everything a student could want—good, clear, descriptive prose; nice pictures; lots of extra "enrichment" topics sprinkled throughout the chapters; a large number of good problems at the end of each chapter.

I continued using Bueche for several years until an intrepid group of iconoclasts in one of my *regular physics* classes approached me at the end of the school year and said they understood and comprehended my

lectures, but they found themselves completely lost when they went to the book for clarifications. In short, they wanted me to know that the text I had so lovingly selected for them was *absolutely useless*. In fact, they were even indignant that they'd had to spend over $100 (the cost of a physics text in the late 1980's, early 1990's) on something that did almost nothing for them when they went to it for help.

I was appalled. How could they *not* like that book? As far as I was concerned, it was the greatest.

What I realized after some thought was that the things a *physics student* finds useful in a text is not necessarily the things a *physics teacher* finds attractive in a text. Why? Because physics teachers don't look at books from the perspective of someone who doesn't already know the material.

Sadly, it is *teachers* who order books, so it is teachers the commercial book companies want to court. In other words, although it wasn't at all obvious to me before thinking about it, there were things about the text I had selected that I found good and useful from my own perspective as a teacher, but that didn't do a very good job for my students.

With that bit of enlightenment, such as it was, I decided to write a book that was aimed specifically at my students and my students alone. And because the book would never be used by anyone *but* Poly students, or so I thought, I could completely ignore the things I knew other physics teachers might demand in a text.

During class I present to my students in fair detail everything they need to know to master the physics we are covering. I do this using demonstrations, labs, videos, lectures, the occasional discussion and solo and collaborative problem solving sessions, but in any case, the coverage is complete. So for the book, armed with my student's mandate, I proceeded to sit down every night after class during the next year and write out everything I said and did in the way of conceptual points and math and theory in class that day. I wrote informally in the *first person* discarding the very formal *third person passive* that was and still is characteristic of most physics texts.[1] Students underline words, phrases and sections in a text in an attempt to break complex ideas into bite-sized pieces. I figured *what the hell*, why not *start out* with bite-sized pieces, so I wrote the book in an outline format instead of standard, densely packed paragraph. I used big print to make it easy to read. I included all sorts of notes in the text

[1] It is funny, but in later years I would have students tell me that as they were reading my book, they could hear my voice in their head.

to let the students know when they could skim a section because it was background and would never show up on a test, and when they needed to completely engulf the entirety of a section. I did the monumentally heretical thing of putting full-blown solutions to every chapter-end problem at the end of the text.[2] It was, in short, unlike any book that existed on the market at that time.

As I said, that first book was written for my college level, non-Calculus, "regular" physics class. Ironically, the main problem I ran into that first year didn't come from my regular physics kids, it came from my A.P. students. I assume it was curiosity, but a number of them over the course of the year borrowed this new book from their friends, read it, then came to me to bitterly complain that the book I'd written for the regular folks was WAY better written than the book they (the AP kids) were using (remember, it was the industry standard, Halliday and Resnick), and why the hell hadn't I written one for them?

That was not originally on the docket, at least as far as I was concerned. Still, due to the urging of my AP students, I decided to see what I could do for them. I figured it wouldn't be hard as I had the scaffolding already developed in the regular book. All I needed was a year to put it together.

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[2] I might add, this was a huge no-no from the standpoint of most teachers. Why? Most teachers want to be able to assign nightly, graded homework, and that doesn't work if the solutions are provided at the back of the text. It wasn't as though I was such a hotshot innovator. I'd taken this path to remedy a problem I'd run into. About four weeks into my first year at Poly, I queried my students about their time commitment to the class. They told me that given all I was making them do, nightly homework included, they were spending between ten and fourteen hours per week doing physics. As the school's guideline was to have *no more minutes of homework than minutes of class*—less than four hours per week—I realized I had to do something about the formal workload or I was going to get hammered by the school's administration. My solution was to provide problems for the students to do on their own, should they choose to do so, but not *require* the problems to be done as homework. It was shady, but I didn't have much choice. Besides, I felt at the time that students should be made to take responsibility for their own education. My telling them what to do every night wasn't going to do that. I didn't really care whether they learned the stuff on Tuesday or Thursday night, just that they be able to negotiate a difficult problem they had never seen before when test-time came. As a consequence of all that, when I wrote the book, I included chapter-end problems but I also included the full-blown solutions. (For the record: Although I've continued to supply full-blown solutions to all the chapter-end problems in all of my classes, I finally migrated back to giving "graded" homework every night—graded in the sense that a turned-in assignment would garner a couple of points for the time spent doing the work. The move was designed to keep the kids engaged during the few weeks between tests and to cut down on cramming just before a test.)

I had a terrible time creating symbols for the solutions section because I didn't yet have (or, for that matter, know how to use) a dedicated Equation Editor (this is a program that allows someone to write out and insert mathematical relationships into a manuscript . . . amusing note—this parenthetical comment tells you something about when this book was written as at the time, most adults didn't *know* what an Equation Editor was). I survived as best I could with a cut-and-paste, third-party program.

Still, it was really, really fun to do. Because mathematicians at the time didn't teach math the way physics folks *use* math, I wrote a chapter on *derivatives* and a chapter on *integrals* from the perspective of a physicist (going on the assumption that the class was to be a good *college prep class*, I inserted discussions about of all sorts of non-AP math I'd had trouble with in college—this was way before Google or YouTube was around so good descriptions of math operations like the *del operator*, the *gradient*, the *divergence* and the *curl* just weren't around). I included all sorts of commentary in the solutions sets at the end of the book. I wrote a six-page preamble that summarized everything I thought students in general should know about going into a physics class, including a few friendly jabs at the AP folks and information that was specifically personal to *my* class.

As an example of the latter, in addressing how one might deal with a class that assigned no formal, nightly homework, I wrote:

> For those of you who feel naked without some kind of assignment guidance, here are my suggestions:
>
> i.) YOU WANT TO LEARN THIS STUFF AS FAST AS YOU POSSIBLY CAN. The tests are going to require you to *think on your feet.* That means you need to give the ideas time to crash around in your head before you have to use them on a test. It also means that if you wait until a day or two before the test to try the chapter-end problems, etc., stuff is going to be swirling around you like a tornado when it comes time to take the test (and this completely ignores the fact that approaching the chapter-end problem in this way will give you no time to come in and ask questions should you find yourself confused). That is not going to help you deal with the test questions, *none of which you will have ever seen before*!
>
> ii.) . . . etc.

You get the picture. It was my fantasy book written as a gift to my

students, and nobody but me and they were ever going to see what was inside. I put everything in it that I thought would have made life easier for *me* when I first started out (remember, I managed to get a D in my high school physics class, so I had in my educational background much experience at being confused).

The bare bones version of the AP book was ready the next year. It was a behemoth—maybe four inches thick. Students got a half point extra-credit for every grammatical and dumb-ass math error (cos 30^o = .5) they found . . . and there were a herd of them (errors, not students). Within a few years, the book had been vacuumed nearly clean of goofs. I added chapter-reviews and multiple-choice tests with solutions. By the time I was done, the book was a 1300 page, two-volume monster.[3]

By the time I was done, it was a very good, no frills (black and white), Calculus driven, C-level, Advanced Placement (AP) physics text. There were no photos in it, only a ton of self-generated computer graphics, sketches and schematics.[4]

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[3] This, not including a *Conceptual Manual* that went along with the text. All the books should still available for free download at http://faculty.polytechnic.org/cfletcher.

[4] Interestingly, the Achilles heel of all of this was found in the tools I had available to me in putting the book together. I used Microsoft's Word 5.0 to generate the text, I don't remember the third-party program I used for the Equation Editor but I do remember that I used Aldus Freehand to generate the graphics.

For the graphics, I produced a kind of frame inside which the graphic would go, and I used a dotted matrix pattern to fill the frame and make it look relatively neutral. I picked the pattern to look good when the file was printed on a 300 dpi printer, the standard when I wrote the book. About five years on, printers all went to 600 dpi. With the added refinement, the frames shouted at you, so my choice was to change the pattern on each one of the five hundred or so frames (give or take), or let it slide. I let it slide for a few years, then when I decided to try to fix it I couldn't because Aldus had gone out of business and Freehand no longer ran on the "new" computers. I was stuck with the original.

As for the text, every time Microsoft would change the current version of Word, all the settings would change. That meant that when I'd open a file, everything would shift around. All the graphics were statically fixed in the text, so with all the margins, etc., messed up, the graphics would go all over the place. I had to go in and re-put every graphic in the book (a huge pain in the ass) every time Microsoft got cute and came out with a new version of the program, .

What was worse, though, was that at some point Microsoft's updated versions of Word were simply no longer backward-compatible. This wasn't all Microsoft's fault. Apple was changing the architecture of its computers, and Word was changing to take advantage of the evolution. But the long and short of it was that within ten years, I couldn't edit anything in the book because I no longer had programs that could even open the original Word documents . . . and that was a real bummer.

At the end of that first year, my students were happy, I was happy and all was well.

Even though I hadn't written the text for consumption outside Poly, and even though the students thought it was great, I still got some resistance from Poly's then administration because I was requiring my students to buy and use a book that was not commercially produced. The administration rightly observed that my book had never been peer reviewed.[5]

In an attempt to remedy that problem and make my administration happy, I contacted several private schools in the country to ask if I could send them a copy for their perusal. Most accepted and of the schools that did, I had two schools decide to use the text with their own students.

I found this amazing. I had done no advertising beyond sending out a few free copies, and all of a sudden I had sales outside of Poly. There was a small problem, though. The books were being printed at a Xerox place I'd found that had a very high-quality machine. I would pick up the copy and pay with a personal check, then I'd submit the bill to Poly for reimbursement. I did the same thing with the binding, which was also done at an actual bindery that was remarkably close by (it is still there in Pico Rivera, maybe twenty minutes away by freeway).

In other words, until I started getting outside orders, Poly had taken care of *all* the printing and binding costs (remember, I wasn't supposed to be making any money on the book) passing those costs on to the students when Poly sold the book to students through Poly's bookstore.

With schools other than Poly ordering books, I needed some way of billing them outside Poly's financial system. That is when I created "Leland Scott Publications." *Leland Scott* had been my original middle and last name (my mom, if you will remember, changed my name to Fletcher—the last name of my stepdad—when we got to San Marino and I entered the fourth grade). I had always wanted to do something with my real name. This was my chance.

In creating my own little one-man publishing house, I extricated myself from Poly's control.[6] What's more, even though I kept the price

[5] For the first several years, Poly's administration forbade me to add any profit into the sales of the book because I was the author and it might seem as though I was taking advantage of my students by making them buy my own text. This was perfectly acceptable to me as I hadn't written it to make money in the first place.

[6] Interesting sidenote: Around this time, I applied for one of Poly's $5000 professional growth grants (these grants were available at the time and were being handed out by Poly like candy suckers at a doctor's office). My thought was that if they gave me the grant,

the same as it had been when Poly was paying the bills ($69.50 for the two-volume, hard bound set when conventional texts were going for $120 to $150 each), I actually made a little bit of money because production costs went down as production volume went up. It was a pittance, but that was OK. Again, I hadn't written the book to make money, anyway.

As the years rolled on, I had a swarm of non-Poly people I didn't even know contact me to tell me how readable and *student friendly* the text was, at least in comparison to other texts on the market.[7] The input got me thinking.

Although I have since surmised that the book was, indeed, well written—a fact that, to this day, dumbfounds me—I didn't at the time consider myself a very good writer. Consequently, I concluded that what made the book so student friendly was *the format*. In an effort to interest other authors in stepping away from the very formal, stilted format and style that was so prominent in physics texts, I did two things.

First, I wrote an article for *The Physics Teacher* magazine criticizing the current norm and suggesting an alternate way to go . . . *my* way. The article was promptly rejected. (This shouldn't have been a surprise. The editor of the magazine was, himself, a prolific writer of physics texts. I can just imagine his ulcer kicking in as he read this highly disrespectful blast from this little shit-of-a-nobody out in LaLa land.)

I let the article go and tried my only other alternative—I went to the national AAPT meeting.[8] Organizationally, it was and still is comprised of both high school and university physics teachers.

The first year I went, I submitted a paper—essentially my article—and had ten to fifteen minutes to make my case to anyone who wanted to attend my presentation session.

I ended up with a decent size crowd. Some seemed to agree, but some misinterpreted my presentation as a bold-faced attempt to generate book sales. This was a major no-no within the membership's ranks. It is not that everybody and his mother wasn't pushing something at those meetings, often in sessions of their own. It was just that seeing someone

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I'd transfer the book-rights to the school. For some reason, the people in charge decided to give me a half-grant. This rather chintzy move irritated me, so I refused the offer, kept control of the book and went my separate way with the text.

[7] Many, many years later, when I started grading AP tests for ETS and the College Board, I had a surprising number of fellow graders say, when they found out who I was, that they had used my book as a personal reference when they'd started out, and how useful it had been for them.

[8] AAPT stands for American Association of Physics Teachers.

else appear to be doing the same seemed to really piss people off.[9]

In short, the AAPT experience was a bit of a bust. Most everyone there was presenting some pet project of his or her own. If your project didn't support theirs, you were nobody of interest to them. As far as I could tell, none of the authors there were the least bit interested in the possibility that the way they formatted their books might make life easier for the students who would use their books. I might as well have been talking to the wind.[10]

And why, speaking of talking, *am* I talking about all of this here?

As a consequence of my presentation at the AAPT meeting that first year, I was invited to go down to a university in Pueblo, Mexico, to talk to their professors and students about textbooks. It was a very off-the-wall thing to do, but it was summer, I had the time and it would be an adventure.

When I got there, I found the place to be very third-world in its look. The buildings were dirty, unpainted, ill built, and completely without even the slightest amenities. In fact, I was mildly appalled when I went to use the toilet in the administration building and found the commode had no toilet seat attached to it. Nevertheless, the *people* were good hearted. They very much wanted to do the best they could for their students, and they had very impressively made something of worth in an educational sense from the very little they had. What I also found was that the other speaker from the U.S. was a man named Hewitt.

For those of you who don't know, Paul Hewitt wrote the physics classic *Conceptual Physics*. His book was and still is *the* mainstay of "physics for poets" classes at the university and high school level all over the world. In other words, this was a really big name in the world of physics

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[9] I went to the AAPT meeting the next year and headed what they call a *Crackerbarrel*. This was a kind of town meeting. My topic was: *What kind of things do students find useful in textbooks?* Halfway through the session, unbeknownst to me, the person sitting next to me picked my book up off the table where it was sitting, looked at it, then handed it to the next person (not something I intended). By the time I realized what was happening, it was halfway around the circle. Once again, I came across as someone who was trying to hawk a book, which turned a fair portion of the attendees off. It was a shame, though, because I really did have something useful to offer.

[10] I did have a meeting with one AAPT official about book formats and what my students (and others) seem to think about them. Her suggestion was that I do research and, if my claims were substantiated with hard evidence, come back and make my case. Not being steeped in academia, and not really having the resources or background or connections needed to do formal research (all of which I'm sure she knew), I took this as a brush-off. It may or may not have been, but it is interesting how different my mindset was, versus hers.

textbooks.[11]

While there, I hung out with this guy and his friend, a fellow who was there to talk about using computer games to teach physics, for three days.

Hewitt kind of reminded me of a hippie. He had a great sense of humor, though, and a very level head. And as he had experienced a lot of the same problems I'd had in learning physics for the first time, the two of us got along very well.

At the end of the stay, we decided to exchange texts. I, of course, already had a copy of his book, but getting the newest version was still cool. He, on the other hand, surely didn't have mine.[12]

I contacted Hewitt via email about six months after the Mexico conference. I start the email with," You may not remember me, but . . ."

He responded by saying that he would never forget me, and then he wrote something that dropped my jaw. He said he really liked my book (I never was sure whether he was talking about the physics book or the eastern philosophy book), and that he read it every day. In fact, he kept it in his bathroom for sit-down reading.

In other words, Hewitt—this world-renowned author—was reading my book once, twice, three times a day, depending upon how many dumps he took over a particular twenty-four-hour period.

I found *that* to be very funny.

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[11] It turned out that he had a special relationship with the people at the university. He had been down there numerous times even helping some of the people out financially, though I only knew about this peripherally.

[12] I also gave him a copy of my E.Phil book, which he requested upon finding that I had written one.

Chapter 20

Musings 6
Thinking and Thought-forms; (Energy in Thought; As you Sow . . .)

[This is a small point-of-order for the scientists in the crowd—a preamble to the preamble.]

Scientists don't generally like to speculate about things that can't be tested. At the upper end of the scientific community, a theoretician's chops are predicated on his or her ability to generate theory that reflects the physical world, as confirmed by the pokings and jabbings of experimentalists. Nobody in the scientific world worth their salt is going to go off half-cocked about some topic that can't be probed thoroughly in a reproducible way (though *string theory* in physics these days has certainly stretched the bounds of propriety for many). That is the way science works.

Those dictates have served us well and are perfectly reasonable.

In that vein, there is eloquent, intricate beauty in the physical and electrochemical mechanisms that come into play when physical structures take on the characteristics we associate with *thinking*. Biologists are continually developing new tools to allow us to delve into and understand the workings of these mechanisms. It is fascinating work.

Nevertheless, when scientists are asked how far along we are in understanding *human* thinking and the fact that we humans are consciously aware *that* we think, the honest ones (in my opinion) admit we don't know very much. Why? Because from a *man is nothing more than a genetic freak that has evolved up from the fishes* perspective, the mere act of thinking and self-awareness is pretty incredible. Imagine wiring an enormous

mass of interlaced electrical circuits that, working as a whole, can understand the phrase *I exist*. That is what we are looking at, at least from a biologist's point of view, when we talk about the human brain. *Unbelievable* is the only word I can think of to describe the act of thinking and cognizing, especially if all we are looking at when it happens is neurology.

Although they certainly did acknowledge that there are physical, matter-based mechanisms involved in the brain when an individual executes the act of thinking while in a body, the Brothers made it pretty clear from their talks with my group that there is more going on when it comes to thinking and thought. Specifically, they often referred to what they called *thought-forms*.

It is probable that most hard-core scientists are not going to readily accept the idea that human thought creates ephemeral structures that have *energy* associated with them and, as such, have the ability to materially affect the physical world. And biologists are *really* not going to like the idea that *because these thought-forms have energy, they have a kind of life of their own*.

If this is wholly, totally, completely outside the realm of where you are willing to go with your worldview, hear me out anyway. Because much like String Theory in Physics, entertaining this idea is going to take us to some very tantalizing places.

And what's really nice about it is that if what the Brothers have said is accurate to reality, *NOBODY GETS PENALIZED FOR NOT AGREEING*. If what they have said is true, karma and life will support your growth as a spiritually evolving Being no matter what your child-self believes is the case (as irritating as this may be due to the apparent pretentiousness of it all). Not a bad deal: disown it, *damn it* even, and it will still lovingly support and work for you. (Sounds sappy, but if, again, the Brothers are right, that's the way this place works.)

_____x_____

[Preamble.]

This is at least part of what I have come to conclude about this place as a consequence of my time with the Brothers: Within the universe, Consciousness resides on a continuum. There are Consciousnesses that are so different in their form that you or I wouldn't even recognize them as Conscious (what lies at the heart of the atom is a good example). There are

Consciousnesses that are so far ahead of humankind in the ways of spiritual development and power that comparing them to us is like comparing the human race as a whole to a single ant.

In the beginning, as the seeds of this solar evolution were being planted, what the Brothers called *the Great Artificers* thought into place all of the elements that would be needed to allow lesser Consciousnesses like you and me to "grow-up" through experience in the physical world. Included in this was the concept of duality, and included in that were all of the primordial forms of emotions you and I have at our disposal as human beings.[1]

As these forms were based in thought, they all had energy associated with them. And as you and I exercise them through the creativity of our own thought, they support us as we feed them. In short, thought-forms underlie human existence in an enormously powerful way.[2] Getting an idea as to how this works is what this chapter is about.

_____x_____

[I'm going to shoot at the idea of *humans thinking creatively* from a number of different perspectives. What follows is one of them.]

You are not your body. You are a Consciousness. Sit quietly with your eyes closed. Note that you are *aware* that you are sitting quietly with your eyes closed. Your ability to be aware, to be conscious, *that* is what you are, and it will exist whether you are in a body or not.

When in a body, Consciousness's task is to learn to deal skillfully with *existence in matter*. Humans are specifically learning to deal with *freedom of will*. The primary tool you and I have available to do that is found in our ability to *think*. I alluded to this above. I also talked about it in the E.Phil book. Some of what I said there follows:

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[1] Example: The Artificers created the thought/matrix for what we call love along with the thought/matrix for what we call hate. Presumably, the Artificers are what Blavasky identified in *The Secret Doctrine* as the Dhyan Chohans (*dhyan* being Sanskrit for "one who meditates")

[2] I remember running into Plato's *Theory of Forms* when I was taking my philosophy classes, and the idea that there is an archetypal form for everything that exists seemed pretty far out and kind of a dumb idea as it was presented by my philosophy professor. From what the Brothers have said, it now makes a lot more sense . . . especially given the fact that Plato was an initiate of the Mystery Schools of ancient times (I'll talk more about those in later chapters).

> When the Bible said, "God made mankind *in His image*," it is probably that it didn't mean that there is some giant guy flying around out there, happily creating universes, who just happens to look like you and me. If the East is correct, the God-like quality that is imaged in humankind is wrapped up in our ability to *think creatively* (that *is* what sets humans apart from the other animals). According to the East, what Beings at the human level are learning to deal with is how to exercise the creative forces of *thought*—the very same forces (obviously toned down) that God animated when it *thought the worlds into existence*.

You aren't seeing the presentation in whole from the E.Phil book, so the idea that the worlds were *thought into existence* may not seem very likely. Still, paraphrasing what I said a few chapters ago: "The idea that thought has form and substance isn't as far from your own experiences as you think. If you dream, you are experiencing something that seems physically substantial but is, in fact, based wholly in thought. It is you *creating a world* within yourself through which experience can happen, then you *moving into that world* to do the experiencing. Similarly, God *thought the inner and outer worlds into existence* through the Artificers. The main difference was that It did so consciously and with purpose whereas your dreaming is done involuntarily. The effect is similar, though, as is the mechanism."

If you think back to the material in the chapter on the Brothers, there was a quote in which they said something to the effect that *you are a builder of universes (within yourself)*. They were referring to the fact that within the confines of your thinking, there exists universes, literally, of your own making.

_____x_____

[Why is the idea of *thought-forms* and *thought energy* so important, and why am I willing to assume something like this exists when I have no way of proving it?]

(As a sidenote: Around the time I was getting my Master's degree in Physics, I took several Western philosophy classes. In one of them, I distinctly remember the professor saying that Western philosophy *didn't*

accept the idea that *thought was an entity unto itself that had energy associated with it*. According to him, it wasn't a part of Western tenets because if one assumed something like that, it opened up a huge can of worms.

Being surprised that western philosophy had even *considered* the possibility, I never asked him what was in that can of worms. That was a mistake. If for no other reason than just being complete, I'd love to be able to present his (their) arguments, then take them apart from an Eastern perspective. Not being able to do that, though, means I just have to go charging into the alternative without.)

So why *am* I willing to accept without proof the idea that thought has energy, has form and can affect the physical world in a physical way? As mindless as this is going to sound, probably the simplest response is that it is something the Brothers talked about as a reality, and they were individuals I trusted (and still do trust). Beyond that, though, there are two reasons: one that has to do with my own personal experience and one that falls into the "it just makes sense" category. We'll do the "personal experience" first.

_____x_____

[Beginning . . .]

This is not something I would ever have argued about with anyone (which is part of the reason I didn't let this autobiography out while I was alive), but according to the Brothers, no two atoms are alike. Sure, all *iron* atoms have 26 protons, but an iron atom that has spent its above-ground life as part of a tractor is different from an iron atom that has spent its above-ground time as part of an electric chair. What makes them different, at least partly, is the *thought-energy* to which the two have been exposed. Atoms absorb thought (or, probably more accurately, the consciousness that animates atoms absorbs thought).

Although the Brothers didn't say so specifically, I gather that this is the basis for what the Theosophists called "the akashic record." I wasn't anywhere close to sensitive enough to be able to register this kind of thing on my own, so it was one of those things that I just kind of heard about, nodded, and figured I'd never have confirmation of one way or the other. Turned out that I did run into a situation that gave me confirmation of a sort. I didn't realize it was happening at the time, but after the fact I looked

back and thought, "Ahha!"

I should additionally preface my story with a small warning. One of the things I talk about in the E.Phil book is the fact that *words* just don't have the intricate subtlety needed to describe what is seen and felt in deep meditation. What I'm about to relate didn't happen during meditation, but it was meditation-like. It was also, I think, the consequence of the Brothers nudging me toward being more aware *inwardly* than I might normally have been (kind of like what happened to me in my experience with the Dalai Lama). I'm pointing this out because I've had trouble writing out what happened in a way that is easily relatable, and it finally dawned on me that my problem is finding the words to adequately paint the picture. So in short, if you get it, great. If not, don't worry about it. Just keep trucking.

_____x_____

[The story . . .]

The first time I went to Europe, it was a pleasant trip that included Kay and Cathy and a few friends. It happened during one of my introspective periods. I didn't notice anything strange while I was there, but when I got back and was able to compare *being there* with *being here*, something jumped out at me. For lack of a better way to express it, the tone (vibe?) of the two places was different (ach . . . words . . . so not great).

I was walking in Old Town in the heart of Pasadena the day after I got back, and as I did I couldn't help noticing that it felt like I was walking effortlessly on a fresh mountain trail. My mind was clear. There was nothing tugging at me psychically (again, words) as I cut through the middle of bustling Old Town.

What was weird was that at one point as I was walking, my thoughts went back to Siena, Italy—a city I loved—and I realized that when I was walking through *that* city it felt comparably like I was trudging through a thick, viscous, psychic fog. In fact, I realized that all throughout Europe, it had been like slogging through a mental bog in waist-high waders.

This didn't scream at me when I was there. I was in the middle of it and life was what it was. What's more, this is not something I think most people would have noticed. I think the Brothers made me hypersensitive to what was there because they wanted me to see that there is a palpable, measurable, distinct difference between the two places, and being a surprise rather nicely countered the skeptic's claim that I registered it because

I thought it *should* be there.

But why the difference? I think it was the consequence of the fact that there has been at least a thousand years (maybe more) of intense, cultural, human emotion centered in European cities, and the effluvia that has been left by all of that *thought-energy* has soaked into the atomic structure of the place leaving a subtle but perceivable mark.

On the other hand, the fog that comes with the overlay of human habitation hasn't had time to seriously coalesce here in "the new world." There just isn't the psychic debris *here* that there is *there*, and with the Brothers' help I noticed the difference.

Sure, there were American Indians on the American continent for thousands of years, and sure, they certainly had emotional experiences that were traumatic for them, but it was different. They lived in nature, which is a cleansing agent unto itself. They didn't live all jammed up against one another. And probably most importantly, the mindset of "culture" didn't compress itself into the fabric of the population with the same kind of emotional intensity as was the case with the populations in so-called "civilized countries" like England, France, Germany and Italy.

The Brothers once said, "You paint a room with your thoughts." The difference between the *tone of Europe* and the *tone of America*, I think, is the difference in the amount of "painting" that has been done on those two continents.

Given the experience I had, the idea that *thought* can affect physical matter doesn't seem all that far out (at least to me).

_____x_____

[And the second piece?]

The second reason I'm willing to accept the idea that *thought has energy* has to do with *consequences*. To see what I'm talking about, follow along as we wander through still more bits and pieces of my world.

From where I am sitting, it would appear that there is a huge pot full of mental/emotional responses available to us human beings as we do our best to negotiate life in a body. For relatively normal, mainstream individuals, the child-self selects whichever of those responses it will use in dealing with everyday life in a somewhat Darwinian way: whatever works gets the nod.

So, maybe, "little Johnny" finds that he can control the people around him by being constantly poised to *throw a fit* if things don't go his way. His temper is the ticket. Not wanting to suffer his anger, everyone tiptoes around him.

By using this response to deal with life, "little Johnny" is doing two things. First, he is creating within himself, within his thinking, a mental edifice based on *anger*. Even so, what he experiences when he gets mad is not something he has created out of whole cloth. In flowing into that self-made pattern, he additionally links himself to a very powerful thought-form . . . that of ANGER . . . *that already exists* where thought-forms "live" in the inner-world.

In fact, every time he animates anger in his thinking, he not only makes a link with the *thought-form* of ANGER, allowing it to pour through him, he also focuses (on a very subtle level) *his own thought-energy* into that thought-form *feeding it in the process*.

In other words, he not only expresses his own anger in his life, he also reinforces the energy-form at the heart of that pattern. In doing *that,* he personally fortifies the presence of that thought-form both in the inner-worlds and in his own mental/emotional complex, making the inner-world thought pattern even more energetic and able to affect the minds of others.

If there is no reason for life, if you and I are simply the spawn of genetic freaks that have evolved up (as I said earlier) from the fishes, then when "little Johnny" comes to the end of his life, that will be that. He will die, pass into oblivion, and all his thinking and all the good and bad he has done while being "little Johnny" will sooner or later be swallowed up by time.

But what the Brothers have said is that that isn't what happens. According to them, *you* are not your body (I realize I'm repeating myself, but this is, again, an important point). You are an Awareness, a Consciousness. What's more, there is a very specific reason why you are entombed in a physical body here on this level. You, as an active Awareness, are a part of a much greater whole the Brothers (not to mention a considerable population in the East) calls *the One Self* or, more descriptively, *the Divine Mind* or, to put it in more Western terms, *the mind of God*. And, being a part of the Mind of God, your task while draped in physical form is to learn how to exist responsibly in this very foreign environment . . . *in matter*.

Human Consciousness is the highest level of Awareness that is evi-

dent on this planet.[3] At our level of evolution, our specific task is to learn how to use the creative energies of God. That is what *thought* is. It is, on a profoundly subtle level, the tool that the Divine Mind used to create this place.

Repeating part of a quote from the E.Phil book that I used here in Chapter 8:

> In the Vedic tradition of India, God is believed to be a lot like that. *Within the Divine Mind's infinite perfection*, the argument goes, *It must have within Itself the possibility of growing and becoming more perfect. If that were not the case, It would be static—and static states stagnate*.
>
> From this perspective, the One Self is believed to have created the universe *out of the stuff of Itself* (i.e., out of Its own Thought), then sent highly developed *fingers of Its own Consciousness* down into that physical universe. Why? Because by seeping into the myriad nooks and crannies of experience-in-matter, It creates the possibility of growth within Itself.
>
> Life on earth is one of those crannies, and humankind—you and I—are believed to be tiny specks of Awareness, baby Consciousnesses, that are evolving as the Divine Whole evolves. Human life may be unique in its existence, but it is not alone or especially blessed. It is one of many cosmic experiments, a delicate contrivance the aim of which is to allow fledgling Consciousness to learn to deal with *existence in matter* through *immersion in matter*. And as Consciousness grows from its experience, so grows the Mind of God.

You and I are constantly creating universes of thought within our self. And in doing so we constantly support and energize archetypal thought-forms that actively exist as entities that are, in a sense, alive. The energy we give them through the exercising of *our* thought is ours. We are responsible for it, which means we are to some degree responsible for them.

So "little Johnny" dies. This is a Being who has used thought in a relatively destructive way. He isn't damned for it, but he does have to take

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[3] The phrase, "that is evident," is really important here. We aren't the alpha or the omega. The Brothers are clearly far beyond normal human beings, and the Avatars—the Christs and the Buddhas—are farther yet.

responsibility for the thought-energy he has put into play. At some point in time, the mechanism that exists in nature that allows a Being to be drawn into a body will take over, and "little Johnny" will re-incarnate as, maybe, "little Billy" or "little Jane" (or "little Aziza" . . . or whoever).

Human Beings are immense in their inner structure, so aspects of the self that come out while animating the new-born physical form of, say, "little Jane" will only partially overlap the aspects of the self that came out in the life as "little Johnny." It will still be the same Being, though, and at some point in some lifetime, that Being will have to deal with the thought-universes It created within itself as it trundled through the world as "little Johnny."

And how does that work?

That Being's link with the past is in its attachments to the living thought-forms it animated and partially created and helped to solidify and feed in its "little Johnny" lifetime.

"As you sow, so shall you reap." The connection between sowing and reaping could manifest immediately, but if it doesn't, it will still happen. It will just take longer, maybe many lifetimes longer. Sooner or later, though, "little Johnny" will have to take responsibility for his actions, and it all has to do with his connection to the archetypal thought-forms he linked into and fed.

Which brings us back to the question, "Why am I willing to accept the idea of *thought-forms* and *thought-energy*?"

I could be wrong, but I have a fairly strong suspicion that reincarnation is a reality. And if that be the case, there has to be a link between *the me that is* and *the me that has been*. Thought-forms, I believe, are at least part of that link.[4]

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[4] Being able to sense *streams of thought* and the karmic nudgings that might come from them is something you would expect a Master could do. I had an interesting experience with that idea toward the beginning of my time the Brothers.

When I was first starting out, I had a great desire to talk to people about what I was learning. It's not that I wanted to tell people about the Brothers. What I wanted to talk about was the Eastern Philosophies and the insights they held. In that vein, when I was long-term subbing at North Hollywood High School, I did these lunch-time Eastern Philosophy "discussion" (more like monologues) for interested students (a remarkable number of kids would show up for these). Around this time, USC had what they were calling a "free college" program—a once-a-week, night-time opportunity for anyone who wanted to host a non-credit class. I jumped at the chance to do an E.Phil presentation similar to what I was doing at the high school.

In looking back, this was just stupid. I knew a lot less than I thought, but I was enthu-

siastic and undaunted and my first Wednesday night gathering saw, maybe, fifteen USC students attending (one of my North Hollywood High kids also showed up). The meeting didn't go great, but it was OK.

The next week on the night *before* the second meeting, I was talking through Kay to one of the Brothers, and completely out of the blue he said, somewhat cryptically, "Even if you speak truth and wisdom to an empty room, the *universe* will hear." I remember thinking at the time that this seemed like an odd thing to say, but I let it pass.

On my way to USC the next day, there was an accident on the Pasadena Freeway. As a consequence of the traffic jam that ensued, I arrived to the class forty minutes late. Thinking I wasn't coming, everybody had left. I felt a little foolish doing it, but in honor of what I had been told the previous evening, I spoke briefly to an empty room that night.

The North Hollywood High kid had been there that evening and told me later that everybody had been quite irritate that I hadn't shown, so it wasn't a surprise to find that nobody came that next Wednesday, which was fine. As I said, I really didn't know enough to carry something like that off in any case. But I did take two things away from the experience. First, the Brothers could see that my karmic lines were *not* taking me toward teaching that class, and they let me know in an obliquely powerful way with their observation about *speaking to an empty room*. And second, given that the manifestation-of-thought is *speech*, it made me a whole lot more thoughtful about how *thought* and its off-spring (speech) are connected to *the whole*.

Chapter 21

Musings 7
Thinking and Thought-forms
(Feeding Thought-forms and A Quick Turn-Around)

[There is an odd, interesting, human phenomenon that rather naturally falls out from the perspective we have been looking at. I'm going to talk a little about it here. To get to it, though, I have to say a little more about death.]

In the E.Phil book, I talk about death. Noting that I've changed the numbering of the footnotes (should you be someone who has read the E.Phil book), what I said follows:

> Heraclitus[1] was asked by a student, "What is the difference between life and death?"
>
> Heraclitus said, "There is no difference."
>
> The student followed, "Then why don't you kill yourself?"
>
> To which Heraclitus replied, "Because there is no difference."
>
> Jakob Boehme[2] was asked, "Where does the soul go when a man dies?"
>
> His response? "There is no necessity for it to *go* anywhere."

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[1] Heraclitus was one of the Greek philosophers from whom we have very little in the way of extant works. He was the man who, when referring to the changing nature of existence, said, "You can't step into the same river twice." [Interesting side point not in the E.Phil book: I don't know if the story presented above (about the student) is a known tale from Heraclitus or if it was the Brothers recounting something that has been lost to history.]

[2] Boehme was a late sixteenth, early seventeenth century European mystic.

Interesting responses both, but do they make sense?

Have you ever noticed that the only *time* you will ever have to do anything is *NOW*?

Ten minutes from now will exist, but you don't yet have access to it. Ten minutes past existed, but again, you don't have access to it. Truly, the only time you'll ever have to do anything is NOW . . . NOW . . . NOW . . . NOW . . . NOW . . .

Have you ever noticed that the only *place* you will ever be is HERE? Looking out through your eyes at this book, where are you? You are where you always are: you are HERE.

The only time you will ever have is NOW; the only place you will ever be is HERE.

With this in mind, where do you go when you die?

Answer: Assuming you don't cease to exist, you won't *go* anywhere. From your perspective, you will still be HERE.

The question is, where *is* HERE?

Consider the following: You are sitting in Physics class. The lecture is scintillating but your mind takes off thinking about that hot date coming up next Saturday night, or the argument you had with your mother this morning, or that big test you blew yesterday. From your perspective, where *are* you during the daydream?

As you sit amidst your meditation, you are still HERE . . . but where *is* HERE? Your body is in Physics class—but your attention isn't. The teacher is talking merrily; you aren't hearing a word. Where have you gone?

From the Eastern view we are examining, it is believed that you have focused yourself into what are called *the inner worlds*—you have gone *inward*.

In the lecture on *thought*, we talked briefly about the *inner worlds*. At that time, they were said to be a "place" where THOUGHTS have a substantive, physical reality, a place where THOUGHT resides.[3] It was also said to be the place into which Beings move at death.

[3] One could make an argument for the possibility that Jung's *collective unconscious* is intimately related to the idea of thought-forms existing in an "inner world."

We swim in a sea of thought,[4] touching, animating, affecting the inner worlds as we ourselves think.[5] In fact, we are so intimately linked to their existence that our immersion in them goes largely unnoticed.[6]

Nevertheless, as far as the East is concerned, we are in constant contact with them. [7]

So what happens when we die? It all depends upon how one looks at it. If we are in constant contact with the inner worlds (we *are* constantly thinking), and if death is a refocusing of the Awareness away from the physical body and into the inner worlds, then at death we are essentially *going* to a place we have always been. Put another way, we don't *go* anywhere (thank

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[4] [I remember the Brothers saying that thought so fills free space that a massive, physical body like the earth is more like a void because it takes up space that would otherwise be filled with thought-energy.]

[5] This is even true when we are apparently unconscious. As far as this view is concerned, sleep is a state in which the body goes dormant while the self focuses into the inner worlds (ever notice that during dreams, you are still HERE and it is still NOW).

[6] Our minds drift aimlessly on a warm summer day and we give it a name—we say we are daydreaming. Once named, we cease to find our ability to do so remarkable . . . It is! The "place" we have gone is immense. (Again, the riddle: What is bigger on the inside than it is on the outside? Answer: the mind!).

[7] Real meditation is a fascinating thing to experience. It is the focusing of the self into dynamic thought-forms that reside in the inner worlds. From this view, the meditations of the Buddha before His enlightenment take on new significance. When Mara, the personification of illusion, sent his legions against Siddhartha, it was a very real confrontation. When *fear* enshrouded the Buddha-to-be, for instance, it was a palpable, living thing that enveloped him. If there had been anything in Him that could have resonated with that thought-form, fear would have found an entry point and Siddhartha would have been lost.

[Additional note not in the E.Phil book: This is also why initiations in the Greater Mysteries were so seriously dangerous to the aspirant. The individual making the effort was, at the higher levels of initiation, taking a stand in a completely unprotected sense (initiates were sent "out of their bodies" and into the inner worlds during the effort, losing the natural protection the body provides against inappropriate other-level encroachments) against terribly powerful, potent forces from within the inner worlds. To fail was to lose control of the self . . . quite literally (though at the lower levels one of the Brothers would usually step in before things went completely south). It could mean death (i.e., not being able to re-enter the body in an appropriate way) or the insanity of one who has lost control over the self (we'll talk more about this problem later). In short, the Greater Mysteries were a spiritually rewarding experience for those who had made the efforts and were ready, but they were not to be taken lightly. Saying that Apollonius of Tyana, for instance, was an Initiate of the Greater Mysteries was a seriously serious statement.]

you, Jakob Boehme).

Looking from the perspective of the body, on the other hand, death is definitely a departure. We shed our physical form (like removing our clothes before going to bed) and slip completely into a "place" that is somewhere other than the body.

What is the journey like? The following is one of a number of plausible scenarios out of the East: [Note not in the E.Phil book: In fact, it is the one the Brothers related to us.]

When the Being/child-complex steps across the line, so to speak, it finds that it hasn't changed much at all.[8] It still has the trappings of personality around It, though with time that falls away. It still has the wants and desires it exercised during its previous stint in a body, and it is still aware. In fact, the self finds that it still *has* a body—one that is as appropriate and substantial in the inner levels as your physical body seems to you now on this level. In short, the self finds that there is no real difference between "life" and "death" (and thank you, Heraclitus) . . . [9]

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[8] This is a bit of a non-sequitur, but apparently the Brothers said in one of the large meetings that when a Being leaves its body and moves at death into the inner worlds, it first spends a very short period of time with a Guardian who facilitates the introspection that naturally comes at that point (I say more about the Guardian in Footnote 10), then moves in whatever direction its actions and thoughts-while-in-body dictate. With that observation, someone asked, "What happens if the individual is an atheist and thinks that oblivion awaits?"

Evidently, according to the Brothers, the individual will, after its time with the Guardian, be drawn (as I said) toward the thought-forms it has attached itself to in life. In other words, if it has attached itself to the idea that there is *nothing* after death, that is what it will find . . . the nothingness of oblivion. The Being will stay in that state until they realize it is *they* who are experiencing the nothingness, which will highlight the fact that *they* haven't been extinguished after all. I don't know what happens once that enlightenment comes. I suspect the Being will break out of the state and proceed in whatever direction is appropriate. I mention this because there was just something funny about a Being finding themselves in whatever situation they are drawn to by the thought-forms they have embraced in life, and having that at least temporarily be oblivion for an atheist.

[9] Raymond Moody is (or at least was) an MD and a Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia. He has done research on people who have been declared clinically dead for a period of time before being resuscitated via CPR or whatever. According to his work, some people who have been in this situation have brought back remembrance of what they were doing during their brief period of death. Of those who had remembrances, one of the things commonly reported was that after lifting out of the body, the departed found himself or herself in a body . . . but one that wasn't physical. Some even recounted trying to get the attention of their rescuers only to have one of the workers walk straight through them. As

I said more in the E.Phil book, but that's enough for now. The point is that when you die, you don't suddenly sprout wings and become an entirely different entity. You continue to be you. If you have had physical addictions to alcohol or cigarettes or drugs, you don't immediately lose the craving for that experience . . . though you no longer have a physical body through which to exercise and satisfy the addiction. And if you have mental addictions like "little Johnny" did from the last chapter, those are not going to go away, either.[10]

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bizarre as this may seem, it is right in line with the East's view of after-death states. [As an additional side point, something I mentioned in the E.Phil. book: Several years after I started at Poly, I was doing the E.Phil. class, talking about this very topic, when I noticed that a girl in the group was quietly sobbing. Concerned, I asked her if she was OK. She said *yes*, it was just that she had been in an accident in front of her home (she lived just a block from Poly) when she was six or seven years old, and had died. After several minutes, she was resuscitated. Thinking nobody would believe her, she never told anybody about the experiences she had while "dead." The things she experienced were the very things I was talking about, the very things Moody had reported. She was crying as a kind of catharsis because this was the first time anyone had substantiated what she personally had happen to her.]

[Another note not in the E.Phil book: First, it is 2022 and just recently a researcher evidently published an article saying that he had detected brain activity at death that is similar to the kind of brain activity we see during dreaming (Lord only knows how he got it). I presume skeptics will use this bit of amusement to discount Moody's work because, well, that's what skeptics do and because if you didn't know better, it would be easy to discount things like "going to the light" as simply wishful thinking brought to life through dream by a dying brain. I will talk more about the brain and how it acts like a thought-form transformer later. What I will say here is that (1) it shouldn't be surprising to find that the brain is active at death; (2) what shouldn't be lost sight of is that simply because that brain activity is superficially reminiscent of dreaming doesn't mean that "going toward the light" is an ephemeral, short-lived illusion that is *caused* by a dying brain . . . as appealing as that thought may be to a nihilist; and (3) this kind of "evidence" does nothing to explain how a discarnate (a dead person) can experience a rescuer walking straight through them or the fact that some in this situation left the immediate scene and were able to recount discussions they witnessed taking place elsewhere (usually waiting room filled with relatives).]

[10] Two points: If you know anything about the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* (which as I pointed out earlier was really called *The Book of Coming Forth to Light* by the Egyptians), the "houses the soul must pass by on its way to the assessors and the weighing of the heart" takes on a whole new meaning as the houses had the power to distract and draw off the path anyone who could be seduced by their siren song, songs that resonated with addictions of the flesh.

On a different note, in the E.Phil book I talk about what can happen to an individual who has extremely strong addictions, be they mental or physical, when death comes. The problem is that the attachments don't go away with death even though the body through which the addictions were satisfied is no more.

Going into this in a little more depth, just after the body dies the self spends a period of

The personality you drew around yourself while in that body stays with you until, as the physical body and its auric complex naturally decays after death, it has had time to dampen.[11]

x

time in introspection where the previous life is looked at in an impersonal, analytical way (this is done with the help of a Guardian characterized by Moody's patients as *a Being of light*). When this is done, if the individual is relatively normal, the self will move into devachan, a heaven-like state in which the best of one's aspirations can be played out. If, on the other hand, the individual has attached itself to the heavy thought-forms associated with addictions, that self will not be able to shed those cravings and will be drawn to the place where those thought-forms naturally reside. In the inner world, this level is the closest to the physical level and is called *the lower astral*. It is in this "place," this thought-form cesspool, that the self will be trapped until it is able to disassociate itself from those thought-forms and move into devachan, or until it is time again to reincarnate. What is nasty about this situation is that while in it, the self will still want to experience the addiction(s) it had attached itself to in life. But without a body, the only way it might do that is to attempt to leach experience from individuals *in body* who are actively experiencing (on the physical level) the addictions the discarnate desires.

How might this occur? A human body has an energy field around it (an aura) that is bounded by an *auric shield*. This shield provides a natural protection against otherworld encroachment. Unfortunately, the influence of drugs or alcoholic (or even high emotion) can thin out this shielding. So if a discarnate wants to experience drugginess or the effects of alcohol (or even just high emotion), all it has to do is find someone in a body who has a thinned out auric shield and who is experiencing the desired effect, and send *tendrils of thought* down into that porous auric complex, sometimes actually affecting the thinking of the individual in body in the process.

The Brothers called this rather spooky situation *overshadowing*. They said that if you could see auras and, by extension, into the inner worlds, being in a bar would prove to be a very creepy experience. As you could imagine, this would have all sorts of implications for mental health if mental health workers were savvy to it (though I don't know what they'd do with the knowledge as there just aren't individuals around with the inner-world juice needed to sweep away discarnates).

Mercifully, karma doesn't leave these poor Beings without help and hope. One of the many things chelas do in their service to humanity is to work with discarnates in this state to help them attempt to get free of the thought-forms to which they have entrapped themselves.

And another side note: Although it wasn't due to an addiction, the underlying mechanism that allowed mom's experience to happen was having an auric complex whose auric shielding was compromised.

[11] As that dampening proceeds, the patterns will cease to be pronounced but you will still be responsible for the energy you put into establishing and maintaining them in the first place.

[I alluded to an odd phenomenon earlier. What was that all about? I'm going to do this in two sections.]

There is one interesting consequence that is rarely talked about concerning the idea that the thought-forms you draw around yourself while in life don't just automatically vanish at death. To understand it, though, we need to talk a little more about the *mechanism* associated with death.

There are, according to the Brothers, somewhere in the vicinity of sixty billion Beings at the human level in our system. That means that at this particular point in time, somewhere around 10% of the Beings who are experiencing as humans are actually in physical bodies. The rest are in the inner worlds.[12]

Although there is no hard and fast rule about this, it additionally means that a Being could, depending upon Its necessity as a spiritually evolving entity, be in the inner world for upwards of a thousand years between incarnations . . . (though things are a bit skewed now as this is the *Kali Yuga* and some Beings need to come back more quickly for all sorts of reasons).

On the physical level, when the body ceases to function and dies, it begins to decay. The same is true in a metaphysical sense of the subtle structures associated with the energy fields that exist around all humans that, among other things, links us to the inner worlds (I'll talk more about the aura and *waiting points* later). This disassociating process can take quite a while. That is why the active connections to the thought-forms the Being has attached itself to during its previous life don't *immediately* fall

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[12] I might add, they aren't just sitting around there like the Housewives of Who Knows Where. Repeating some of what I said in Footnote 9, they may be involved in devachan; they may have gone into what the Brothers called *the halls of learning* where go Beings who are interested in furthering their understanding of . . . whatever; they may be trapped in the *lower astral* if they have attached themselves in life to thought-forms of particularly heavy quality and vibration, and haven't been able to extricate themselves from those thought-form upon crossing over at death. What is true of all Beings on the other-side is that they aren't making the leaps of understanding and change that can be accomplished *while in a body*. It isn't exactly a stagnate state, but in comparison to being in incarnation, it isn't very animated as far as *potential for change* goes.

Translation: In the off chance you are reading this thinking, "*The other side* sounds better than what I'm experiencing in the *here and now*," don't commit suicide thinking *over there* is better than *here*. Not only will you end up in an encapsulated state (encapsulated in the sense that all the problems you weren't willing to deal with while in a body will still be with you), you will no longer be in a situation in which you can make the changes karma was pushing you to make in an attempt to make things better. Suicide is not the answer to anything.

away of their own accord.[13]

. . . So let's go back to the life of "little Johnny."

Let's assume "little Johnny" was a normal fellow in the sense that he animated and absorbed the thought-stuff that is typically associated with *being a guy*. Reinforcing stereotypes to the hilt, let's say he was strongly motivated by his stomach and his penis. He watched football on weekends, left the housework to his wife, read the newspaper (or iPad) at breakfast to the exclusion of conversation with his spouse, and did a lot of scratching, farting and swearing when he was hanging with other men (that's right, when I go for classic, probably outmoded stereotypes, I go big!).

It comes time for "little Johnny" to buy the farm. It doesn't matter how he dies, but he does. And in doing so, he re-directs his focus from *existence in a body* to *existence in the inner world*.

As was pointed out earlier, when someone *steps across the line*, they don't change much—the Being "still has the trappings of personality around It, though with time that falls away. It still has the wants and desires it exercised during its previous stint in a body . . . " In short, "little Johnny" is still "little Johnny," he just isn't in a matter-based body any more.

As I said above, under normal circumstances, that Being would have a lot of time for the perception of "Johnnyness" to evaporate. But what happens if, for whatever reason, "little Johnny's" karma is to come back quickly reincarnating as "little *Jane*" after, maybe, a few tens of years. This is way short of the thousand-year respite that is typical, and way short of the amount of time nature needs to dissipate those male-related thought-forms he has spent an entire previous life animating.

So what happens? What happens is that "little Jane" comes into life holding onto patterns that are typically male. And in fact, those patterns may still be so strong that "little Jane" will feel in her head that *she is in the wrong kind of body*.[14]

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[13] It is also the reason why it is suggested that a corpse be allowed to just sit for four days before being cremated, though that is nowhere close to enough time for the subtle levels to dissipate and is solely to allow the grossest of the attachments to disconnect. Also, interestingly, what many legitimate psychics were hooking up with back in the early 1900s when seances were all the rage weren't the dearly departed, they were connecting to these decaying energy shells which had been a part of the departed, but were trying to dissolve away as they should. Energizing these forms were, I might add, a huge disservice to the departed.

[14] There are other ways for this kind of dislocation to occur somewhat later in life when it's "karmically correct" for skandas (tendencies brought in from a past life) to assert them-

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[The rub!]

At this point, I should say that at least some of what I am about to say is conjecture on my part. The Brothers talked about this, but I don't remember where they stopped and where my naturally inquisitive brain picked up (I really do enjoy thinking about how things work *under the hood*, so to speak). That said, I don't think they would find objectionable anything you are about to read.

Let me also say that I understand that talking on a theoretical level about experience that people are actively living with has the potential of being quite dicey, especially if the experience has attached to it the kind of pain and suffering that has been associated with living over the ages in the LGBTQ world. It is so easy for a thought that might have reasonable standing in a cosmic sense to be misinterpreted or misunderstood in the microcosm of someone's personal life. Being aware of that is part of why it took me so much time to write this section. I'm trying very hard *not* to inadvertently step into serious doo-doo here.

So I'm talking to a queer friend of mine who is amenable to the idea of reincarnation, and I lay out the thinking I have just presented to you. She isn't put off by it. In fact, she finds it reasonable and fascinating.

I then say, "What is kind-of cool about this, assuming it is a reality, is that it means that *anybody* could, if the karma was appropriate, be drawn into what many of our conservative brethren ignorantly call the *aberrant sexual proclivities* associated with *being queer*. . . "

I continue, "What's even more fun, assuming you can get passed all the hurt they've caused with their self-righteousness, is that if you happened to have a neighbor who is one of those born-again Christian types who points belligerently at scripture and claims that homosexuality is an abomination, *they have no idea how shaky the ground is upon which they walk*. Why? Because if this mechanism is as I've reported, they may find themselves karmically drawn into the gay community *as a member* next

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selves along this line. They are not what I'm talking about here. What I'm referring to here is the extreme, and it's intimately related to what happens if someone comes into a body too soon (though when it's karmically right to come in, you really can't call it "too soon," it's just when it is).

time around. I mean, imagine your standard, male televangelist railing against the sin of homosexuality every Sunday morning, then dying and, twenty years later, he's born into a woman's body feeling decidedly out of place. You gotta see the humor in that!"

This, in a nutshell, is me trying to find amusement in an innocent observation.

Unfortunately, this is where things have the potential of going south, and where an idea about the mechanics of this place, viewed from a completely impersonal perspective, can be completely misunderstood.

That became more than evident with my friend's response, which caught me completely by surprise. "I can see how making a self-righteous bigot into a queer next time around could hold a certain amount of amusement in a poetic-justice kind of way," she said, "but I'm not very comfortable making the life I'm living now into a kind of cosmic punishment for the chronically stupid in our society because your scenario seems to be suggesting that the gay population of today, myself included, have been the prejudiced, bigoted assholes of yesterday. I don't think of my life in the here-and-now as being that kind of thing."

My reaction? Clearly I need to say more.

As far as I can see, this form of homosexuality is a logical consequence of the way this place is put together. Thought-forms exist. A Being in a body naturally associates Itself with the thought-forms linked to "its kind." In other words, under normal circumstances, someone in a male body is going to be drawn to thought-forms that are, in the widest sense, typical of being male. If a Being doesn't have time to shed those cosmically superficial thought-forms after death and before coming into a new body, there will be a crossing over of thought-streams and, voila, you have a Being in a female body who feels like she should be in a male body (or vice versa). In short, this isn't a "God punishing the wicked," kind of thing. It is simply a consequence of the mechanisms that make this place go.[15]

Having said that, and acknowledging that I may very well find myself in this situation at some point in the future (and, for that matter, would not be surprised to find that *everyone* experiences it at some time along the way), I still have to say that by its very nature, homosexuality is an inherently dislocating and difficult path to find oneself on (feeling like a woman

[15] And again, I am speaking to the most extreme—I realize there are different iteration possible.

but trapped in a man's body—seems pretty dislocating to me).

The hormonal, psychological and neurological make-up of the human animal (or, for that matter, pretty much all two-sex species) is geared for an attraction between opposite sexes, if for no other reason than for the propagation of the specie. So although there are people in this situation who appear to be living quite comfortably with the mindset of homosexuality, from a strictly linear, sterile (and, in this case, possibly short sighted) interpretation of "the nature law," having *men attracted to men* or *women attracted to women* doesn't seem to make sense.

Yes, there have been times in human history when it has been the norm—think about early Greek history, for one—but there was stuff happening then that isn't happening now that made it more reasonable (not the least being that at the time there wasn't wide spread education of Greek women, so if a man wanted to be around someone he could talk to and be simpatico with, it had to be another man).

But getting back to now, karma and nature don't generate situations that are potentially painful for no reason, so what the hell is going on?

I believe the answer to that is: Being in this cross-over state quite simply affords karma some very interesting and useful possibilities. One of the more curious but powerfully important possibilities, metaphysically speaking, is that somewhere along the line, humans have to come to grips at a gut level with the fact that they are not their body! There are surely a lot of ways that karma might do this, but one possibility is to draw individuals into experiences in which *what they think they are inwardly* (I *feel* like I'm a woman) does not match with *what they physically appeared to be* (I am *riding* in a man's body).

A second interesting twist is that at some point in time, the thought-energies that typically run through women will need to converge with the thought-energies that run through men (and vice versa). This might need a little more explanation.

In the beginning of this evolution (and boy, am I conjecturing here!), I suspect that the thought-forms that were most commonly attached to being a male were very much oriented around the utilitarian aspects of life. How do you catch or grow enough to eat? How do you protect yourself and your family?

Women, on the other hand, were not geared the same way men were. They were more subtle in their nature with an auric complex that was considerably more sensitive than that of a man, if for no other reason than because part of their physical structure was designed to bring children into

the world. Creativity and artistry was around them (when I was in elementary school, I can remember marveling at the magnificently sketched ponies girls would absentmindedly dash off when they were bored during class, almost like doodling—most guys didn't do that or, if they did, it was of power objects like cars or fighter jets).

One of the things that *is* characteristic of homosexuals is that they seem to strongly animate the thought-energies of the sexual group they appear *not* to be. The gay man is often highly creative and sensitive. The lesbian woman is often assertive and bold.

At this point, we are more or less in the middle of the sweep of this evolution. We are in the Kali Yuga. Homosexuality allows the thought-energies of the two "kinds" to intermix in a fairly powerful way. And as they do, it allows Beings the chance to more fully learn how to *exist in matter*.[16]

Those two points (especially the first), by themselves (in my opinion), would provide ample justification for karma to bring to my friend the "queer" life she was experiencing. But there is more to it, and that additional thing is on a whole other level . . .

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[The lesser-side of the child-self:]

I talked about the psychology of the child-self in the E.Phil book in the chapter titled, "The Emptiness That Is Full" (it was centered on the teachings of the Buddha). To understand what karma is dealing with, I've included a section of that chapter below:

> . . . At humanity's current stage of development (on average), the child we each sport as ourselves is very much a mixed bag. It has (we have) developed within itself some qualities that are noble, selfless, and in harmony with the benevolence of God. This is the higher-side of the child.
>
> Juxtaposed against that, we have additionally developed a lesser-side to the child that is almost totally devoted to nothing

[16] This is not to say there aren't straight men who have a gift for fashion and art. Then, again, it is always possible that those who fall into this bailiwick have had previous lives as gays and they've simply brought into this life the perks of that experience without the affectations. The next-life, long-term effects of mixing up the thought-forms in the way I'm suggesting would not be nil. Otherwise, it would be a waste of karma's time and effort.

further than itself. It is that part of the self that incessantly cries: I want to be secure; I want to be liked; I want to be wealthy; I want to be respected; I want to be fulfilled; I want to have fun; I want to have power; I want to do damn well whatever I please.

I want; I want; I want. That is its battle cry.

In short, if you look around today you will find very few people who *don't* direct a FAIR PORTION of their *thought* and *energy* and *focus* on the fulfillment of their desires and perceived needs regardless of the fact that those desires and needs change with the wind and their fulfillment often put others at a disadvantage.

This is a serious problem for most of us at this point in time. The lesser-side of the child-self is so insecure and self-involved, it will use any device to elevate itself in the eyes of others and, paradoxically, itself, though it is a marvel the degree to which it deludes itself as to what it is really doing.

One of the ways the child-self often attempts to "do for itself" is to exploit those who appear different from itself. So you have the high school comic who acts the big shot by making a classmate look small through belittling jokes. You have the southern plantation owner two-hundred years ago who enjoys plantation life on the back of his slaves. You have the privileged, white, male citizen who denies women the right to vote *a hundred and fifty years ago* because the power of the vote in the hands of women would be dangerous to his prerogatives. You have Republican officials at both the state and federal levels today who pass laws designed to suppress the vote of the less fortunate, most of whom happen to be Democrats. You have the asshole "store manager" at the local corner market who makes the lives of his workers miserable because it makes him feel like a big man when he throws his weight around. *And you have those very same put-upon workers* unconsciously looking down upon anyone who isn't like them, the immigrant, the homeless, the homosexual . . .

Karma is a teacher. Experience is neutral. Nothing is wasted. So I see a picture of a scared, helpless, downtrodden child in the middle of a war zone, and my heart goes out to that poor soul. Being the generally compassionate individual that I am, I would help that child if I could. But in my empathy, and in the knowledge that if I was that kid in that situation, I would be terrified, what I try not to lose sight of is the fact that each human Being has a history.

Being in that bad situation does *not* necessarily mean the self-that-is-that-kid has been bad in some past life (hence finding the self in a bad situation in *this* life), but neither does it mean that the kid has been drawn into the situation *for no reason*. It may be that being stuck in that circumstances will be the catalyst that will motivate him to devote the rest of his life toward world peace—something he never would have even considered if his childhood had been all lollipops and cotton candy. It may be that he is a chela unaware with karma testing to see how completely he has incorporated into himself the thought-forms of compassion. Or, it may be that he has been a very violent, self-involved person in a previous life (or a whole bunch of previous lives) and needs to have the opportunity to experience the same kind of violence he was responsible for doling out himself, but from the other side of the fence. (Or maybe, probably, something in-between . . .)

The point is that nobody can tell why anyone is in the situation they are in. What is assured is that karma does not punish. It may "balance the energies" an individual has put out in previous lives, to the considerable dismay of the child-self of the individual who is being "balanced,"[17] but it is not doing so as an avenger. It is doing it because that is the natural law.

So why is someone born homosexual in a given life?

Every individual is different, so truth be told, I have no idea. What I do know, though, is: I will at some point undoubtedly experience that kind of life if I haven't already; there are noble and benevolent reasons why someone might find him or herself in that kind of life, reasons that in the long run will be good and useful for that individual (not to mention humankind as a whole); and when that born-again minister rails about "those deviants," karma will move at some point to bring that sorry soul into the understanding that being bigoted is not the act of a spiritually sane human Being (and not the path to enlightenment).

Of course (speaking to that last point), this could be done with a gentle hand. And if that is possible, I suspect karma will take that path. But if the individual is so bull-headed that he (or she) won't respond to gentle strokes, all sorts of possibilities exist. Karma may draw him into an environment where his being discriminated against is the norm, whether it be a life of abject poverty in a country where the rich and powerful don't care about the travails of the poor, or as cannon fodder in a worn-torn country, or as a woman in one of the more backward Moslem countries, or as a homosexual in the 1940's in one of the less enlightened parts of the United

[17] Think about what I've said about my sister's situation . . .

States.

And if it turns out to be that last possibility, I suspect that at least some of those individuals who have had to deal with the detritus of that Being's speech and thought and actions when he was in full, personal-self cry, will smile just a little at the poetic justice involved in that outcome.

We are, after all, only human.

So going back to that conversation with my friend: No, homosexuality is not designed to be "a kind of cosmic punishment for the chronically stupid," but that doesn't mean karma might not draw someone who IS chronically stupid into that kind of life.

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[One more thing . . .]

It's 2020, and a lot of "stuff "has happened nationally since I wrote this chapter fifteen years ago. What hasn't changed is that life and karma are still giving me little tastes of what it is like to live in different skins.

I've had a glimpse of the life of a felon through my sister, with all the associated problems she has run into trying to find a job and a place to live. That life, for her, is all-encompassing . . . but not for me.

I've had a glimpse of sexual harassment through the first-hand experience of a good friend and Poly alum who was told by three *professional-journal* editors (independently) that if she didn't provide sexual favors, they would not publish her research submissions during the year her university was deciding upon her tenure at the college where she was working as a professor (she refused, reported the incidents to the university and was, thankfully, granted tenure without the publications). That experience, for her, was all encompassing . . . but not for me.

I've had a glimpse of what it's like to be black (I'll say more about this later, but for now) with all the institutional racism that exists within our social, private and governmental institutions, and with all the wealth theft that has gone on for so many hundreds of years, and with the simple fear of what might happen if one is pulled over in a car by a cop. That life is all encompassing for blacks . . . but not for me.

I've had a glimpse of what it's like to be gay and feel you have to hide *who you are* through one of Poly's past teachers, a wonderful man who claimed to be waiting for his fiancé to join him from wherever it was he was coming from when he first joined the Poly faculty. He made that claim

thinking that if he appeared to be engaged, it would suggest that there was a woman in his life which would dissuade folks from thinking that he was gay . . . which he clearly was (sadly, he died of AIDS never acknowledging that that was what he had, or that the reason he got it was because he was living a homosexual lifestyle in Hollywood during the AIDS epidemic). That life, for him, was all encompassing . . . but not for me.[18]

I've had a glimpse of the staggeringly powerful thought-forms that circle around addiction to social media, something our kids have to deal with on a daily basis. That life, for them, is all encompassing . . . but not (thank God) for me.

I've sat over the years as a white, privileged, cisgender male, looking out at the world, taking all of this in. And I do my best, aside from educating myself, to support the courageous warrior activists who are trying to make the world a better place for others, all dealing with the life that encompasses them. And from those self-same people, I am occasionally asked, "Why aren't *you* doing more to help?" (I'm thinking specifically of one very good black friend of mine.)

This is a profoundly embarrassing question to be asked. I have always tried to model good behavior, but I have always had a very strong gut-level resistance to going out and marching and protesting and being vocal in an over-the-top sort of way. Until now, I have never put my finger on *why* I am as I am, it has just been *the way* I've been. The consequence of being challenged has made me think, though, which is good, and here is my answer (I might add, I'm reporting it comforted in the knowledge that my situation is odd enough to not provide cover for others . . . like the morally lazy).

When I was just starting with the Brothers back in the 1970's, one of the fads that had becoming popular amongst the New Age crowds was

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[18] A little more about this. The teacher's name was Eric Stelter, and he died toward the end of the school year in 1989. At that time, the *Garland Theater and Art Complex* was structurally finished but hadn't yet had its seats installed. The school held a memorial for him in the new hall, and because he was so well liked and respected as a teacher and human being, there were somewhere around 500 people, sitting wall to wall on the floor, jammed into the new space. What was particularly heart wrenching, though, was that Eric's mother, who had always (evidently) been embarrassed by her son and his homosexuality, just couldn't wrap her head around the fact that he was so well liked and that that there were so many people in attendance who felt sadness at his passing. At the end of the service, she kept saying (in kind of a bewildered state), "So many people liked him," as though that was hard to believe. Very sad!

group meditations. Aggregates of relatively normal, well-meaning people would get together to meditate for (and send healing energy to) people in need.[19] These groups were usually made up of disparate people who had been drawn to a center operated by a supposed spiritual teacher, almost all of whom were themselves just normal folk.

At one point during those early years, something happened—there was a weather disaster or something, and some of the people who came to Kay's public meetings suggested that everyone get together to meditate for the victims. It was a nice thought, but it was at that point that the Brothers spoke to the practice of group meditations in general (they talked to the inner group about this, not to the people from the public meeting).

They said that it was good and noble that the individuals involved wanted to help in that way, but that doing groups meditations with random people was not something we in the core group should be doing. The problem, they said, was that during a meditation like that there is a kind of resonance of thought on an auric level that occurs amongst the participants. This intimate intermingling of energies links the auras, which means that if someone in the group has "a heavy vibration" (and who amongst us in this day and age doesn't have that problem on some level?), the presence of that heaviness will leak into and affect the auric complex of everyone in the group.

This is not something normal people have to worry about. We are talking about very subtle stuff here (kind of like Pythagoras and not eating beans: if you missed this in that earlier chapter, beans have a heavy vibratory effect that is similar to red meat and, if you intend to meditate deeply into the inner worlds, is not something you want around you—this is why beans were not eaten at Pythagoras's compound, a Mystery School place

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[19] On the surface, this may sound like the group Kay led that helped my mom out with her "I'm one of the bad guys" problem. Kay's group certainly was a meditation group, but that's where the similarity ended. I'd like to believe the individual who participated in New Age meditations were sincere in their desire to serve and were not just doing what they were doing because it was the latest craze, but even if they had fairly psychic individuals in the group, it is likely that their effects would be no more powerful than those produced by a well-meaning religious prayer-group. What made Kay's group different and unique was that it had the Brothers behind it. Remember, mom said she always knew when the group would begin to meditate toward her because when they would begin, everything—all the voices and commotion—would just go quiet? That, I'm quite sure, was because there was a chelas working with Kay's group in the background, adding his or her thought and energy to the meditation. That kind of power will definitely sweep away discarnates post haste, whereas that kind of firepower was *not* something you would typically find in a standard, every-day, New Age meditation group.

at Crotona on the Mediterranean).

My friends and I were not full blown chelas. If we had been, the link between the Brothers and each of us would have been so complete that what we felt, they would feel.[20] But there was *some* kind of link, and I think that our having extraneous commotion happening aurically was not something they wanted to have to deal with.

So what does this have to do with me being active in social and political causes? As quietly supportive as I have been of the people involved in the *black lives matters* and *gay pride* and *me/too* movements (to name a few), my very non-intellectual decision not to be an active participant in any of those groundswells was, I think, an unconscious nod to the fact that any movement on that level would be, in a lot of subtle ways, like participating in a giant meditation,[21] and deep down there has always been something in me that has said *don't do that*.[22]

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[20] Interesting note: Clearly, Kay's link to the Brothers was more pronounced than our own, given how she operated during the meetings. In fact, in the beginning when she was just getting started with them, she was always thinking about them and, inadvertently, toward them. One day she evidently, sheepishly mentioned this, almost as if to question if anyone in the Brotherhood had noticed. The Teacher she was talking to at the time, I think it was KH, replied in a kindly but pointed way saying, "You are like the wind that never stops blowing." You and I are not used to being in a situation in which someone other than ourselves has constant access to our innermost thoughts and actions, but that is the relationship that exists between Master and chela.

[21] And if you think a march is unlike a meditation, think about a march's extreme extension, a mob. Why do you think mobs do things as a whole that the individuals making up the mob would never do on their own. It's because there are very powerful thought-forms that circulate amongst and between the individuals in a mob . . . aurically . . . which is not dissimilar to what happens on a subtle level in a group meditation (the circulation of powerful thought-forms part). I even have trouble sitting in the stands during completely benign group events like watching a CIF basketball game . . . and I NEVER sit to the end of contests like that because I can *feel* the emotional crash that the losing-side spectators experience, which is not pleasant.

[22] This is a little out of place, but it's something I think I should point out: It is 2024, and over the last several months I have gotten into the habit of listening to *The Moth Radio Hour* on my local NPR station. If you aren't aware, the Moth (as it's affectionately called by its listeners) gives story-tellers a showcase to tell tales (from Google: "The Moth was founded by the novelist George Dawes Green, who wanted to recreate in New York the feeling of sultry summer evenings in his native Georgia, when moths were attracted to the light on the porch where he and his friends would gather to spin spellbinding tales."). One of the recent stories was presented by a Dominican Sister (a nun). During her story, which was centered on her life as a nun, it dropped on me that people spend whole lifetimes nurturing skills that will be crucial to their development as a spiritually evolving Being

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[And still one more thing . . .]

One of the main reasons I put this chapter into the book was because I wanted to talk about the metaphysical basis for the situation transgender folk find themselves in, so although this doesn't exactly fit into the tenor of this chapter, I'm going to end with a thought about homosexuality in general. It's kind of a parting shot that I wrote years ago that I find moderately amusing and iconoclastic (which is why I like it). Here it is:

I'm not going to get into all the ways the Bible has been messed with since its text was written by men who in all probability didn't even know Christ, but if He really did talk about sex, I suspect His main point was that sex wasn't a toy. Yes, it does allow two individuals to bond with one another, but it's really a mechanism designed to allow for procreation. It exists primarily to give humankind a tool by which it can create life-forms . . . human bodies through which other Beings at this level can experience.

The homosexual community doesn't use sex to procreate. That is clear and easily identifiable. What's more, I wouldn't be surprised for a Being like a Christ to point that out. But then, again, I'd be willing to bet that if Christ was standing right here in front of us all, and if he chose to be judgmental as so many self-righteous Christians subconsciously (evidently) believe he was, he'd be just as critical of YOUR sexual practices, mainstream America, as he might be of the gay community's.

In short, the fact that He wasn't quoted in the Bible as being critical of standard, fun-loving, dress-your-wife-up-as-a-French-maid, heterosex-

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(being a nun, for instance, is certainly a spiritual endeavor, and adhering to that discipline in a selfless way has to have a very fine effect on the adherent). The human spiritual quest is a long, long journey. And for those who are conscious of being on that path, one of the many pitfalls is the belief that what is important is the endpoint, the gaining of enlightenment (example: many Buddhists believe the ultimate goal is to end the cycle of life, death and rebirth, sometimes referred to as "*getting off the wheel* of incarnation"). As little as the child-self wants to believe this, what is really important is the path to enlightenment, not enlightenment itself. Yes, coming into contact with the Brothers and becoming a chela is probably the cream-of-the-crop when it comes to experiences, but I suspect that if you were to ask them about this, the Brothers would tell you that there are oh so many other experiences along the way *that are just as important*. You are where you are. Don't spend time worrying that you aren't farther along. Give gratitude for the tools you have been given, and focus on what life has placed before you.

ual sex acts doesn't mean He found them to be all that acceptable. All it means is that the men who wrote the treatises that became the Bible didn't say anything about it.

Chapter 22

Musings 8
Thinking and Thought-forms (Walking Meditations; The Brain and Waiting Points)

[The main thrust of this section has to do with what in the East is called a *walking meditation*. Although I've certainly faltered all over the place this time around, I've nevertheless spent a fair portion of my life doing these. If nothing else, the underlying mechanics is interesting. Also, as you read this, you should be able to hear echoes of the quotes from the Brothers as presented in Chapter 11. They really did want us to both understand ourselves and come into a control of ourselves.]

Most people, when they get mad, are completely taken over by the thought-form of anger. Anger suffuses and envelops them. They ARE anger. What isn't altogether obvious is that it is possible to animate a thought like anger without being engulfed by it.

If you are someone who identifies completely with your body and the thoughts that flow through your mind, my suggesting that you *can* experience a thought like anger while a part of your conscious self is observing, is not angry, and has in fact not lost control at all, probably seems ludicrous . . . but it can be done.

How can this be?

For most people, the negative side of anger is usually the consequence of the lesser side of a child-self reacting to *being unhappy with the way the universe has treated it* (this could range from being incensed that someone doesn't share one's sensibilities—how dare they exist—to simply *not getting one's way*). This is usually associated with habit patterns the self has built into itself that allows it to attempt to either *control life* or *strike out at life*. On the surface, it seems simple.

But have you ever had something happen that made you mad, and as time proceeded you got madder and madder and madder to the point of becoming furious? What was happening there?

According to the Brothers (and I know I'm repeating myself some, but kindly bear with me), and ignoring the neurochemical stuff that happens in the brain when emotions brew, allowing yourself to animate within yourself an emotional response like anger links you to the inner-world thought-form *of* anger. That means you quite literally *touch a bit of the body* of the accumulated mass/energy of all the anger that has ever been exercised over human history—as it resides in the inner worlds. Your becoming linked to that thought-form allows energy and force from that inner-world-form to flow from it through you as the experience plays out. And all the while, if you are normal, all you will be aware of within the confines of your thinking is that *I am mad*.

One of the myriad things that makes chelas different is that they don't flow into anger at the drop of a hat, and they can touch a thought-form like anger without being overwhelmed by its negative side. Anger can present itself to them, even flow through them (Jesus and the moneylenders[1]), but as it does so they control it, it does not control them. And as they deal with it, they pull energy out of the negative side of it, dissipating at least some of its cloud of negativity that can so palpably affects "normal" people. It is called *transmuting*, and I don't really understand the ins-and-outs of the process . . . but they can apparently do it.

And the reason I'm talking about this? Without their ability to step aside and watch what is going on within their mental world, chelas would not be able to do the kind of things they do.

I've said it before and I'll probably say it again: I'm no chela. Nevertheless, I've spent a lot of my life watching my child-self act in life. This has been one of my most powerful *walking meditations*. That's not to suggest that I haven't flowed into and been swamped by a passel of thought-forms in my time, but when I have been on my game, that discipline has helped me understand *who I am* and *what I am* and *what makes my child-self tick*, and it has been very useful in my attempt to try to un-

[1] A lot of people think getting anger is an OK thing to do. After all, they will argue, "Christ became angry. Anger is what motivated Him to throw the moneylenders out of the Temple." Problem is, I don't think that was what happened. The Brothers said that the Avatars (the world Teachers), "come with the power in one hand to change all things, and in the other hand the power to make the world a mist" . . . literally. I can't *imagine* a Being with that kind of presence and juice becoming *out of control mad*!

derstand other people.

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[The brain as go-between . . .]

If you have ever been to Europe, you will know that using a U.S.-made electric shaver or hair dryer there can be a bit of a challenge. Why? Because European electric wall sockets produce electricity whose line-voltage is 240-volts AC, whereas American appliances are designed for the 120-volt AC line-voltage that is standard in the U.S.

Fortunately, it is possible to step 240-volts AC down to 120-volts AC using a device called a *step-down transformer*. Consequence? When you go to Europe, you take a transformer with you, plug it into their wall sockets, plug your electric devices into it, and you are good to go. Bottom line: In an electrical setting, a transformer will modify an AC voltage from an unusable state to a useable state.

New but related topic: You've probably noticed that I've talked a lot about *thought-forms* and how they support and affect the thinking of humans. If, though, you've been steeped in Western science, you may be thinking, "What the hell, you need a brain to think a thought. If the brain is damaged, thinking doesn't happen. So what's all of this *thought-form* stuff?"

I don't remember if it was the Brothers or one of the early Theosophists like H.P. Blavasky who talked about this, but as best I understand, on a metaphysical level the brain acts very much like a *transformer*. We aren't talking about magnetic effects here (the electric transformers I talked about above require a *changing magnetic flux* to work). The mechanism is different. What is similar is the effect itself (i.e., taking something in a native state and modifying it to fit a new or different circumstance).

On a very subtle level, your brain (the *physical* mechanism you use when in a body) is designed to do two things. It allows you to manifest your own, self generated thoughts, and it is designed to step thought-energy—thought-forms—down from their natural state in the inner worlds to the concrete, neuro/chemical world science associates with human *thinking*.[2] If you damage the brain, you damage the mechanism. Damage the

[2] Yes, you can stimulate the brain with electrodes and get a "thinking" response, but this is a lot like swamping a *quantum mechanical effect* with a macroscopic effect. What you

mechanism and your ability to consciously cogitate on this concreted level will be limited. That doesn't mean, though, that when you leave your body your ability to *be aware* and *to think* will end. It just means that while *encased in physical form*, as is the case with you and me in the here and now, we standard issue, "normal people" need our *brain transformer* to be whole and active and in synch with the physical world around us.[3]

The Brothers once said that *we are bathed in a sea of thought.* From what I can tell, we have no idea how much we depend upon thought that resides in the inner world.[4] If that be the case, it shouldn't be surprising to find that the brain is, as is the case with the physical body in general, a

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are doing there is overriding the mechanism in a way that is not in keeping with its original intent.

[3] In the movie "Concussion," Will Smith played Dr. Bennet Omalu, a forensic pathologist who battled with the National Football League over making public the consequences of the brain damage that had occurred to professional football players who'd had repeated head hits (the consequential brain degeneration is called *chronic traumatic encephalopathy*). I believe the movie is close to autobiographical. In it, a retired Pittsburgh Steelers player who later committed suicide said to his wife, "I can't stop the voices in my head. They are telling me to kill you." What was going on there? By altering the functionality of the transformer that is the brain, I think that individual inadvertently opened himself up to the *inner worlds* in a way that was not altogether unlike my mom's experience with "the bad guys." You simply can't go beating the brain up like that and expect it to work unimpeded in the way it was designed.

On a little less violent note, a PBS NewsHour piece reported that for Alzheimer patients, upwards of 50% experience hallucinations, seeing "stuff that isn't there." Again, a damaged brain could easily open someone up to the inner worlds in an unnatural way with the consequences being explained by Western science in the only way open to them—by saying the individual is hallucinating.

[4] I can just imagine someone reading this and thinking, "This guy is suggesting that all of my natural brilliance isn't really mine, that my ability to cogitate spectacularly just comes from my contact with thought-forms in the inner world." Let me be clear. You do have the capability to think on your own. It's just that you are not alone when you do it. Those *ahha* moments people have in science? Individuals who have those have made themselves ready for those moments to dawn, but did the dawning materialize from nowhere? And that poet who claims he or she has *an inner muse*. That artist may be flying solo, or maybe when they write something magical, they've tuned into something on the other side. (I know I've written things and, afterward, reading what I've written and thought "This is unbelievable . . . I'm just not that good!") What is assured is that there is no such thing as a *self-made man*. Anyone who adamantly maintains that they are has misunderstood the karmic gifts given them and is sadly saddled with a child-self that is trying to puff itself up in an attempt to make itself look bigger and more important than it actually is (at least in a cosmic sense). There is such a thing as, "Having one's thoughts," but there is no such thing as, "Alone with one's thoughts."

mechanism designed to do a very specific, very important thing. Science can probe it to find out how it works on a superficial level, but if the Brothers are right, there is more there than meets the eye.[5]

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[Waiting points.]

All physical structures have an energy field around them. The energy field around a human being is quite complex. Westerners call it *the aura*.

The inner worlds are NOT *out there*. They permeate the space in which you exist. You are both linked to them and on a certain level shielded from them by your energy field, the aura.

How so?

The shielding part is simple. To keep from being inappropriately swamped by thought-energy from the inner worlds, you have around your auric complex a naturally occurring shield. For most people, this shielding is rugged and does its job without incident. It can be compromised, which is to say thinned out, though, under certain circumstances.

A person, for instance, with a 104^{o} temperature may get a peek into the inner worlds. When it happens, we say they are *hallucinating*, but what's really going on is that their shielding has thinned out and their transformer brain is picking up stuff to which it would not normally have access. Additionally, individuals who use drugs or alcohol to excessive can have shield-problems and can be overshadowed, as I mentioned earlier.

And, then, there is always the possibly of just plain, old, oddball karma. My mom's shielding started out being somewhat porous due to the psychic tendencies she came in with, but it became even more porous and compromised as her curiosity about psychic stuff escalated and she actively attempted to make a connection with entities on the other side. What was weird was that there was a karmic necessity there. She needed to be drawn into contact with Kay because there was a need for *me* to meet Kay.

In any case, it was my mom's auric shield that Kay had mom focus on and work to strengthen when Kay and her group helped mom come back

[5] Long before computers had become as powerful as they are today, back when I owned an Apple IIe (complete with floppy disks and 256k of RAM), the Brothers told us that scientists would eventually come to a point where they could superficially mimic what the brain does (neural nets, though that isn't what they call it) in the design of computers. I'll say more about this later.

into control of herself.

The other side of the coin is how thought *appropriately* permeates through the aura when an individual self thinks. There has to be, in short, a mechanism that allows *thought-forms in the inner worlds* to become *thought in your brain*, and there is. As an individual uses his or her ability to think creatively, especially if the thought has an addictive edge to it, the aura will naturally generate entrance points through which thought-forms of like quality can easily flow in from the inner worlds. The Brothers called these entry points *waiting points*.

In their normal state, these conduits are not quite open as they sit as tiny spots on the surface of the auric energy field. But if something happens that "pushes one's buttons," the individual reacts with whatever thought-pattern(s) they have become accustomed to using in such situations and the associated *waiting point(s)* will open allowing like thought-energy to flow in. As they do, the individual will become linked to the greater inner-world thought-forms associated with their response.

According to the Brothers, if you could see this happen when, say, anger is involved, you would see the *points* expand with the influx of energy, quickly spreading out and filling the aura with a dull, cloudy, redness.[6] This is a person who has been *taken over* by anger. They are no longer seeing clearly. Enervating energy is no longer flowing through them in an unrestricted way. They are overshadowed, temporarily, by the emotion.

It can take hours, days even, for the storm to pass completely and the *waiting points* to go back to mere specks on the surface of the aura, but this is what the Brothers said happens when someone who is addicted to anger (little Johnny from the previous chapter?) *gets mad*.

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[Another *walking meditation*.]

I had an interesting experience with all of this when I was first starting out with the Brothers. I wasn't thinking much about *waiting points* at the time, but in retrospect I can see how it all links up.

I decided there were patterns of thinking in me that I didn't like, so I set the following discipline for myself: I would go through the day being as attentive to the moment as I could be. For five minutes just before going

6 It is interesting that getting mad is sometimes euphemized as "seeing red."

to bed, I would look back over the day and try to identify instances where there was friction.

Going on the assumption that the presence of friction signified my not dealing with life skillfully, I would look at those situations and attempt to visualize myself reacting in a better, more spiritually sane way. The next morning, I would awaken, spend five minutes reviewing what I had seen and concluded the night before, then go out into my day being as attentive as possible. If I was lucky, and I was lucky in this respect with striking frequency, I'd find myself in a situation that was similar to the one upon which I had been meditating. When that would happen, my attentiveness would allow me to see what was transpiring whereupon I would mentally, forcibly focus myself away from the old patterns and into the more spiritually reasonable one (this is why being attentive was so important—you have to notice where things are going *before* you began to flow into the old patterns). In doing so, I worked to change the way I was dealing with life. I knew I was trying to create new thought-patterns. What I didn't realize, but what was true, was that I was also creating the associated *waiting points* that came with those patterns.

This was, for a time, my *walking meditation*, and it probably all sounds good and noble. But after a few months, I began to notice a perverse twist to the whole thing. I'd identify something I was doing or thinking that wasn't so good. I'd generate a counter response for the next time the situation popped up. I'd go into life hoping the experience would show itself, and an experience would come but it would not be *exactly* like the one for which I was ready. It would be just a tiny, tiny, tiny bit different than the one I had "practiced" for, and I'd fail miserably. It was quite remarkable; life did this repeatedly, time and time and time again over a two-week period.

I finally realized that I was never going to be able to identify and map ALL possible situations and responses, and that using a piecemeal approach wasn't going to cut it in the long run. The tiny enlightenment that finally came, which was very cool, was that ALL of the situations could be accommodated with one very simple response. If I could just focus into responding to life in a *loving* way, I would always rather naturally flow onto the correct path.

Being a loving Being . . . what a concept.

Chapter 23

Musings 9 (Meditations)

[The last chapter had a lot of bits of abstract stuff in it. This chapter is about meditation, and it is more concrete in nature. It is also relatively new to the book. It is being written at the end of one of the summers toward the end of the 2010's, just before the start of the school year. I had a couple of dreams a few weeks before I started the chapter that suggested I might not be around much longer (no big deal—kinda interesting, actually . . .) and because the events that motivated this chapter happened *as I was typing*, this chapter is being written in *the present tense*. If I'm still around next summer, I'll probably change things up and put the text into the *past tense* as is befitting and appropriate for a respectable, conventional, God-fearing autobiography.

Addendum: It's now the summer after that summer, and apparently I was completely wrong about the dying thing. Once again, no big deal. The chapter does a good job of explaining the things I want to talk about, though, so I'm leaving it as it stands.]

[. . . how very Zen . . .]

Kay once told me that the Zen artists of antiquity spent long periods of time thinking quietly about what they wanted to paint, then once ready would execute their painting in moments (relatively speaking). I thought the story nice but not terribly relevant to myself. Interestingly, I was wrong.

Two years ago, I rebuilt the deck outside the sliding glass door in my bedroom (I do enjoy building things with wood). My house is dead level, but the lot is not, so the house is about three feet above *ground level* in the back. The presence of the deck lets me *not* walk out those sliding glass doors and subsequently fall three feet into the back yard.

The deck's original design used relatively short, 8 foot, 2x4 planks oriented perpendicularly out from the house. It spanned across the slid-

ing glass windows, plus about four feet on either side (the first photo shows a very cluttered view of the original deck along with the brick wall—it's in the foreground—that separated the out-of-view brick patio next to the house from the back yard from which the picture was taken).

When that deck rotted out, I improved the design by using 22 foot long, 2x6 foot redwood planks laid *parallel* to the house. I additionally extended the footprint out to about twelve feet. In other words, I ended up with a bigger, nicer looking deck (the skill-saw on the deck is to show scale).

The stairs to this monster were laid parallel to the decking, which meant they led out into the yard (the photo you are seeing above was taken before they were laid). Unfortunately, there was a need for steps on the side of the deck (the region facing you in the picture) because most people approaching the deck from, say, the back porch had to go out around the aforementioned brick wall and into the back yard proper to get to the existing, main entrance stairs. Most inconvenient!

My problem was that I didn't really have room on the side to make a conventional set of steps that would walk their way down and away from the decking. I had bricked the area in question a few years earlier, and in the off-chance I wanted to use that area for anything *other* than stairs, there just wasn't enough space to go conventional. If I wanted some form of

steps there, I had to be clever.

I thought about the problem *for two years* and, finally, this summer, the ideas I needed to solve my steps-problem finally came together.[1]

The Zen part of my experience was interesting and quite meditative, as Zen experiences tend to be, even though none of it happened when I was *in* formal meditation. I've found over the years that when I have a problem to solve, especially if it has to do with building something, I will build it in my mind before I actually begin to physically do the deed. I'm not suggesting I'm special in this. I think computer coders do something like this in creating code all the time. It's called *thinking*. Still . . .

In the case of the steps, I finally decided to make them *side* steps. That is, instead of having the steps come out away from the deck, I built them to come down alongside the deck. There were all sorts of challenges to this, some seemingly trivial but not (how many steps do I need to adequately make things work, for example) and some not so trivial (how do I support the free steps . . . how do I secure the step complex to the deck . . . how do I deal with the fact that the ground where the steps would go sloped both *away from* the house AND *away from* the deck . . . and lots, lots more). At one point, my plan found me buying a $40, one inch, concrete drill bit . . . ahhh, tools!

Being able to *think* the edifice into existence before actually *bringing*

[1] Part of what was useful about all of this, aside from finally having steps on the side of the deck, was that I may suggest the problem (i.e., how to create steps for a deck in a very confined space on uneven ground) to Jack Prater for his Engineering class next year. Jack is a fine, fine fellow with a great, wry sense of humor. He puts on the air and facade of being cantankerous, but he is a man beloved by his students. He is also someone I count as a good friend.

it into existence . . . now *that's* Zen![2]

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[Zen thinking is nice; now a little different look at meditation . . .]

New topic: It seems the height of arrogance to criticize *anyone's* use of meditation. People are drawn to the practice for a hundred different reasons. No one reason would appear to be better than the next. It is not my place to discourage anyone from following the path they have chosen for themselves (who the hell am I, after all).

Having said that, this autobiography was written for two reasons. The first was to give my students and friends some insight into the events that have shaped my life. The second was to provide the select-few readers who have chosen to follow a decidedly spiritual path both words of encouragement and a little something to think about.[3] For that latter group, I really do need to say more about hard core meditation.

In the 1960s and 70s, a purported guru from India named *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi* brought to America what he called Transcendental Meditation.[4] It was originally presented as a spiritual practice, but has since been uncoupled from spirituality by those who support its practices.

TM was very big on college campuses when it first arrived in the U.S. It entailed being given a *mantra*, or sound pattern, that was supposedly tailored specifically to the follower. The mantra was intended to be repeated

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[2] Although in this case what I was doing was fine and reasonable, it is possible to mentally meld into a problem in a way that is not so good. When I was studying for my Master's degree in Physics, I would sometimes so immerse myself into my studies that, when I came out of the effort, I felt decidedly dislocated. It was as though I had cut myself off from the vitality and energy that should have been flowing through me. I'm not sure what was going on, I don't know what I was tapping into or what I was divorcing myself from, but it definitely felt wrong and it definitely wasn't a good thing. Then, again, as you can tell, what I did with the steps was different.

[3] In fact, I've included in this book all the things I'd hope to come into contact with my next time around, should I be fortunate enough to have karma provide me with a manual for life.

[4] As a small side note: *maha* in Sanskrit meaning "the greatest" and *Rishi* in Sanskrit refers to someone who has, through meditation, attained truth and eternal knowledge. Putting the two words together to get *maharishi*, or "the greatest of the Rishis," and making this a part of the man's title, should give you some feel not only for his level of humility but also some clue as to his trustworthiness as a spiritual teacher.

over and over again during meditation.[5]

In the beginning of the movement in the U.S., adherents were told not to reveal their mantra to anyone as it was supposed to be personally fitted to each individual. The claim was that in using it, the mind would calm with the repetition and one would come into peacefulness. The Beatles were, famously, seduced by the old guy, and went to India to see him abandoning him only after the old geezer made a pass at one of the members of their entourage.

As the movement unraveled, at least as a spiritual discipline, all sorts of revelations came to light. Apparently, the guru wasn't giving mantra "tailored specifically to you." He was giving the same mantra to great swaths of people (the official statement, as I remember, was that there was one mantra for people who were twenty to thirty years old, one for thirty to forty years old, etc., the rational being that people in the same age group needed the same thought to focus on). It was, in short, a mess and he came out looking like a bit of a scam artist.

Still, individuals involved in the movement have attempted over the years to get TM into schools and the business world, promising to relieve stress (which it probably does), and there are now, according to Wikipedia, around "five million practitioners worldwide."

So why am I talking about this?

There is, today, a ground swell of interest within the U.S. in what is termed *the Wellness Movement*. It is, as best I can tell, focused primarily on health. We had someone come and talk to teachers at Poly about the movement a year or so ago (again, "now" is toward the end of the 2010's). It was very interesting, if for no other reason than there is now scientific evidence that doing the kind of meditation encouraged by the movement affects the body in strikingly positive ways.

After the guy's talk, I went into our then-new Upper School Head's office (Jen Fleischer—she was a good administrator, a nice person and, I believe, the individual who brought the speaker to our campus) and told her that every word that came out of that man's mouth came out of my own mouth to my Eastern Philosophy students forty years earlier, except the scientific verification.

In other words, as I told her, I could have told the faculty that *sitting quietly* and *using yogic breathing practices* would calm the mind, relieve

[5] Part of the reason I started the E.Phil. class was because I knew my very inquisitive, precocious students were going to be running into stuff like this when they hit college, and I knew how completely unprepared they would be for such things when they got there.

stress and heal the body, but it took an outside speaker who could quote scientific proof and was practiced at what was called in the 70's "guided mind imagery" for many on our faculty to entertain the possibilities . . . all of which I was happy to see happen. After all, I was all for my colleagues and friends being less stressed and healthier.

Still, there was something decidedly missing from all of this, especially if you are one of those individuals I mentioned earlier who is interested in a spiritual path.[6]

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[the selfish Buddhas . . .]

I remember the Brothers surprising me during one of the inner-group meetings one Sunday when they made reference to *the selfish Buddhas*. How, I thought, could a Buddha be selfish?

The selfish Buddhas, they said, were Beings who had balanced their karmic debts while here on this level, had come into control of the self in the ways of the enlightened, and had then *moved on* instead of *turning back* to help others in the world. They were Beings who had been offered Nirvana, and had accepted it.

The Brothers had been offered Nirvana and, remembering the travails of their fellows who had not moved as far as they along the path, *had* turned back . . . which is why they are here.[7]

The Brothers once told us that if we spend fifteen minutes in meditation and don't come out a better person, we have wasted that fifteen minutes . . . and by "a better person," they weren't talking about leaving with less stress. They were speaking specifically to our small group, but I suspect they were also speaking to the way meditation was being used in

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[6] Though I should inject here that there surely are individuals who are doing very good things in this movement. I'm just not aware of who they might be and what they are up to.

[7] There is a lovely story told to us by the Brothers about one of their number (they didn't say who) who had achieved the enlightenment of the Buddhas and was about to step into Nirvana, when he felt the tug of his dog, who loved him very much, pulling at his trouser leg. He realized that blowing out into the All-ness of the Divine Mind would mean leaving his little friend behind, and that was not something he was willing to do (if you have ever loved a pet, you will know the feeling). The path of the selfless-Buddhas is to serve those who have not yet achieved enlightenment, and that does not preclude *our younger brothers*. That is what the Brotherhood is all about.

general around the globe today.

TM's focus is to gain peacefulness, but once you have it in the moment it will leave with the next wind if your underlying actions haven't made way for karma to bring you peace for real, and *that* is intimately linked to whether there is within you *selfless action*.

The sports world makes use of meditation to help players visualize the kind of movements they want to accomplish, but how does that impact your willingness to lend a helping hand to someone in need? And even with the recreational yoga we find taught at universities and by private parties in the western world, the meditative exercises that go with that kind of endeavor, again, they are designed to center the self and balance energy flows in the body, making the self more peaceful in the process. These are all *self-involved* efforts.[8]

So where do I stand on all of this? You, if you are like me, are nowhere close to a point in life where the actions you take are perfectly selfless, so having karma nudging you constantly through stress is kind-of a given. And if, as a normal, ordinary person, you were presented with a discipline that might lessen the momentary woes of your child-self, who would begrudge you the taking advantage of that respite? Watching out for yourself, given where we are at this stage of spiritual evolution, is not unreasonable. For folks in this situation, in other words, I give them my best, most sympathetic nod.

But the Brothers pointed out to the individuals in our group, "you have asked, not to be ordinary, but to be extra-ordinary." If that is you down deep in your heart, then thinking about using meditation to just feel better is something you may want to think more deeply about (assuming you haven't already done so). Put a little differently (because I can imagine all sorts of ways people might misunderstand what I'm talking about here):

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[8] Interestingly, in its early days, TM was confronted with the observation that it seems basically selfish. Its reply was that one "couldn't take care of others until one took care of one's self."

This is classic *child-self* mumbo jumbo. Karma brings stress to let us know that there are things we are doing that are not quite right in a cosmic sense. Doing a discipline that artificially removes stress does nothing to address the root-cause of the stress. And in fact, I suspect that when someone gets to a point where their actions are truly selfless, the Law (karma) will "take care" of the individual completely with absolutely no effort on the individual's part whatsoever (this being the basis of Taoism), pretty much eliminating the need to seek peacefulness. It is a wonder how the child-self spins things to make what it wants appear to be a righteous thing.

I'M NOT SAYING that there isn't a place for the kinds of meditation that are commonly "out there" (TM, etc.). I'm not saying I think people should abandon a practice if they feel it gives them something of worth in their life. And I'm certainly not looking down my nose at people who embraced such disciplines. After all, a discipline is a discipline—just the exercising of it is good for the child-self . . . and not everybody, after all, meditates for spiritual reasons. But for people who do meditate for spiritual reasons, my hope is that their use of these practices will move beyond the "I just want to come out of this feeling more peaceful" phase (again, assuming that hasn't already happened).

Getting back to me: I keep saying that I'm not a paragon of anything. I have had periods of intense meditation, and periods when I've done almost nothing (aside from my normal walking meditations, which have pretty much happened all my life since the Brothers). Interestingly, though, I have stumbled of late into a meditation that is different along with being aligned with what I think the Brothers would have found useful. I didn't start it with an eye to including it here in this book, but as it has progressed I decided to do just that. I will be disclosing a little bit of semi-embarrassing stuff to set the stage, but that is needed to make sense of things. Here goes.

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[the situation . . .]

For reasons I'll speak to later in the book, I haven't taught the AP Physics class in its entirety at Poly for thirteen years (as I think I said earlier, this chapter is being written in the mid-to-late 2010's). Richard White is a great friend, a devoted educator and an excellent AP Physics teacher. He has been doing the honors ever since I was banned from doing the duty back in the early 2000s. In recent years, the school has relented in its opposition to my doing the task, but that hasn't necessarily been a good thing.

How so? In just the last few years, Richard has more or less started up a new Computer Science program at Poly. At the beginning of that endeavor, he needed to give up the second semester of one of his AP Physics classes to teacher a semester long pilot *Intro to Comp Sci.* course. To make this happen, the school asked me to take over that one AP Physics section. The reaction from the students was not a pretty thing to behold.

At the beginning of the semester, when students found out what was happening, there was a frantic migration with students using every imaginable excuse to transfer from my section into his. By the time he had 23 students in his class with mine holding only 9, the brakes were put on and additional transfers were denied.

This left one bright young lady who later went on to Stanford and who was NOT used to being told *no*, being denied the shift. The consequence was that she sat in the back of my room with an enormous cloud over her head for the first four weeks of the second semester, didn't listen to a word I said, sabotaged her first test with, as I remember, a 36 out of 100, then told her parents it was all the consequence of the fact that I was a lousy teacher. The parents, of course, came storming into the school, railing about my incompetence and demanding that their little darling be transferred into Richard's class immediately where she could get the education they were paying for. The Upper School Head at the time, deciding that resistance was futile, acquiesced.

As you can probably see, stepping into Richard's shoes was not a pleasant experience . . . which brings us to today. Because Richard will be teaching two Comp Sci. classes this year (as I write this, there are about two weeks before school starts), I will be taking one of the AP Physics classes off Richard's hands. This is not the same situation I found myself in a few years back. I won't be taking students who have already imprinted on him away from him. Still . . .

Richard has been the face of AP Physics at Poly since around 2004. He has a great sense of humor, he has a great classroom touch, he is completely devoted to doing the best for his students and he definitely knows his stuff. Along with all that, he is younger than I am and considerably better looking. It would be nice to believe that those last two points don't matter, but there is ample research in this day and age to refute that claim. I doubt that they would be determining factors for most of our students, but to believe that students are oblivious to those observations would be just dumb.

In short, there is a chance that some students may feel seriously shortchanged when they find out that they will not be spending at least one period every day basking in the glow of Richard's presence. And if I'm not wrong about this, we may see another attempt at mass migration. Given that there are only 25 students signed up for the course—a relatively small number for reasons that are not at all obvious—with Richard having 15 at

this point and my class having only 10, that could be a problem.[9]

In any case, that is the set-up as of a month before school opens.

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[. . . what to do, what to do. . .]

I've been nervous about all of this since I found out I'd be teaching the class. It finally dawned on me that this apparent friction was just life nudging me to be more thoughtful. I shouldn't be worrying about my popularity or about being shunned for a more desired teacher. I should be thinking about how I would be affecting those who I *would* end up with.

I needed to remind myself, in other words, that there is more going on in life than random, chance experience. Students who ended up in my class, even if a migration happened, would be there because they had been karmically drawn to me. There would be a reason for their coming, whether their child-self liked it or not. I needed to begin to set my thought toward doing my best for them (again, even for those who might not want to be around me).[10]

So with that in mind, every morning for the last few weeks, I have started my day with a very specific meditation. It is that meditation I intend to share here.

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[a centering discipline . . .]

As a preamble: The Brothers rarely gave us disciplines to do. Self-devised disciplines would always benefit us more, they told us, because the

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[9] In fact, it turned out that Jen, our new School Head, had no intention of bowing to student or parental pressure to be moved. To her considerable credit, she believes in her teachers and isn't willing to switch kids around simply because that is what a student (and the student's parents) demand.

[10] This is not such a foreign mindset for me in any case. There have been times in my life when I have had the overwhelming urge, most probably due to my contact with the Brothers, to mentally touch in a benevolent and loving way the Higher Self in another human being, and just acknowledge the immensity and power and sanctity of that Self within . . . even if the lesser-side of the individual's child-self was not being pleasant at the time. I have no idea whether the students are going to be pleasant in this situation, but this kind of mental involvement definitely seemed to be where I am going here.

effort would be completely *ours*, versus something we had simply been directed to do. One exception was the yogic discipline that follows: Breath in three times. Each time as you breath in, visualize taking in *energy*; as you breath out, visualize expelling the energy *cleansed*. Do this with your morning meditation, every morning.

Sounds simple. But within the *first month* of trying to do this every day back in the 70's, the effort shortly became a huge mountain of a task for me. I did it, but it was a strain. This, by itself, was educational. It told me tons about my child-self (which is what, I suspect, it was supposed to do). My personal-self was so unruly, it didn't want to be constrained to settle down even for the time it took to take three breaths.

I don't remember how long I did that meditation before moving on to other things.

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[*this* meditation . . .]

So we enter the present, more or less, and the progression of thinking that made up the discipline I ended up with this time (and here we go again with the problem of *words* while trying to imagine *meditation* . . . just a warning . . .).

After sitting rather awkwardly on the floor in a cross-legged position (I am getting old and I am very stiff), this new meditation rather naturally began with my *exhaling completely*. Attached to the action was the thought of *shedding all the pent up "stuff" I'd been carrying around with me* and *pulling myself into myself*.

As a side note, this pulling into myself meant that for the few moments I was doing it, my world extended out no farther than the back of my eyelids. That is, I was so centered and focused that I actually found myself looking at the back of my eyelids. From there, I was free to move outward in my mind in any direction I wanted.

Once done, I would take the first of my *three breaths*. What was surprising in the beginning was that the old *three breaths* meditation morph into something different. With each in-breath, instead of simply visualizing energy being drawn in, I found I rather naturally extended *gratitude* for

the energies that rode on the oxygen that supported me.[11] As I said, this was not a part of the original discipline (and I've used the word "natural" twice now—as much of a literary faux pas as this may be, I'm going to use that word again and again because it's the only word that describes how it felt to do these things . . . *words*).

The exhaling changed, also. I found myself infusing *gratitude* into the energies that rode out on the exhale,[12] that they might be supportive to others, that they might find *like kind* to build on,[13] and with that gratitude was extended a *blessing*. Again, not part of the original discipline, but something that came naturally.

Notice that this was not a discipline designed to make me feel better. It was designed to allow me to acknowledge that I was doing *absolutely nothing on my own*. It was designed to allow me to be *thankful* for all that supported me. And in doing so, there came a certain amount of unsolicited peace.[14]

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[11] I remembered later that this energy, or "life force," that rides on oxygen is called *prana* in Sanskrit. The *fourth limb of yoga*, as presented by Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutras*, deals with it. That limb is called *pranayama*.

[12] I guess it should be noted that that if, as the Brothers have said, atoms have the ability to be impressed with thought and experience (remember the Akashic record), it was not just "the energy" I was permeating with gratitude . . . I was soaking those qualities into the individual atoms of the air that made up the inhaling and exhaling.

13 I was NOT thinking about this at the time, but an on-line Forbe's article (https://www.forbes.com/sites/startswithabang/2016/05/14/ask-ethan-how-many-atoms-do-you-share-with-king-tut/) "proved" that with every breath, you share at least one atom from every human who has ever lived. Hard to believe but apparently true.

[14] A little more about prana and breathing: Most people don't think much about the air they breathe. Mechanically, biologically, the air you breathe contains oxygen. Once a breath is pulled into the lungs, the oxygen is transferred to the blood stream via capillary diffusion. Once there, it attaches itself to hemoglobin in red blood cells. This is transported to the heart which pumps the oxygen-rich blood throughout the body. Body cells absorb the oxygen. Once in the cell the oxygen facilitates the efficient use of glucose in cellular respiration, the outcome of which is the production of energy. In other words, no breathing, no air; no air, no oxygen; no oxygen, no energy for life.

The Brothers didn't make too fine a point of this, but they did say that there is actually more going on with the intake of air than meets the eye (as I alluded to above). Riding upon the oxygen is what they called "universal energy" (prana).

When you read this, it may sound all airy fairy, but if you take the idea seriously it leads to some interesting observations. It means there is a divine energy that is provided to you freely, kind of a gift from the Divine Mind, that allows you to exist and function as a coherent entity clothed in matter (your brain can't last much more than four minutes without oxygen, and the body dies four to six minutes after that). The point is that this energy does it duty regardless of whether you know about its existence, or are a good person, or have

At the beginning, while I was doing this mental exercise, I was usually completely one-pointed. My child-self was quiet. I wasn't thinking about what I would be doing after the meditation, or what I'd done the night before, or how I was feeling. I was completely attuned to *the moment* as the moment moved from now to now to now.

Perversely, within a week I began to notice a change. I was more scattered in the way most people are scattered in everyday life. It was almost as though my child-self had been fascinated by the effort while it was new and fresh, but now it was old-hat and so it wasn't so excited about doing the discipline.

This was all happening during the period of time when I was building that *set of steps for the decking* outside the sliding glass doors of my bedroom. So I would awaken in the morning and my mind would almost immediately begin to cogitate about the steps—that very Zen experience I talked about earlier—until I'd sit down and attempt to do my meditation.

In other words, during this middling period, I would start with an initial exhale, as usual, trying to "shed all that pent up stuff I was carrying around," but once I'd dumped the air I wouldn't have shed anything—I'd still be thinking about those fricking steps—so I'd be unconsciously *holding my breath in exhaled mode* while mentally fighting with myself to *pulled into myself*, and I'd be so completely focused on my intended goal of *mentally shedding* that I'd be sitting there, completely oblivious to this stoppage of breath. It was almost comical.

I'd finally get my thinking straight, take that breath with gratitude for the energies that flowed into me in the process, but because I still wasn't completely one-pointed, I'd unconsciously hold my breath at the top of *that* state trying to get my brain in tune with the tone of *blessing* that needed to be there when I exhaled . . . which wasn't happening because my thinking would have migrated back to the steps . . . so I'd be stuck again.

I'd sometimes sit for twenty or thirty seconds without exhaling, concentrating to get my brain to switch gears to the blessing, before I'd realize I was holding my breath again. I'd finally get the tone right, more or less, and let the air out . . . then take the next breath, but *nothing was happening fluidly in time*. I wasn't really in the moment and I wasn't in control of what I was doing. I was still scattered.

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woes, or are just mindlessly crashing through the world as is the case with so many of us. It does it duty no matter what, supporting you breath by breath by breath.

Meditating on this as you take individual breathes can take you to interesting places.

What pulled me out of this was the realization, finally, that *the moment is the moment*. Being *in that moment* means that *what sits before you* in a mental sense at a given instant is what needs to be focused on and what needs to be viewed *until the next instant* whereupon the *what* of the previous moment needs to be released and the new instant's *what* becomes your new focus of attention (and WOW, are words ever failing me again, like, big time). When I realized this, everything calmed down and I was able to do the meditation seamlessly.

In that, I was given a little enlightenment during the period I did this meditation that had nothing to do with students and everything to do with me and my inner world. It wasn't expected and it wasn't sought, but as most enlightenments do, it came naturally.

Once beyond the breathing part, assuming I was flowing with time as though time didn't exist (i.e., once I was *in the moment* and not jerking from future to past to future), I would extend a blessing to the highest in those who would be drawn to me and my class next year.

Most people don't understand what that really means (and believe me, I WASN'T THINKING ABOUT THINGS IN THIS WAY AT THE TIME), but what I was effectively (unconsciously) doing was making a *mental link* with each of the students I would end up with, shotgun style (remember, I still didn't know who they would be, only that there *would* be individuals drawn into this bailiwick).

This isn't as creepy as it sounds; we do this kind of thing every time we interact with people. I was just doing it in a more focused way than normal. Additionally, this wasn't an effort on my part to influence child-selves in an attempt to soften their reaction to me, should they be disappointed in not getting Richard as their teacher and/or should they be disapproving of me in general. It was an acknowledgement that no matter what reaction their personal-self might have to me, I knew that in them stood an immortal soul that I honored. It was a pledge of sorts that I would work for that Higher-self's child-self no matter what the circumstances ended up being.

Just like the Brothers *looking into the inner worlds* and seeing the Beings of this world as tiny lights, I looked passed the personal selves of the students that karma would draw to me, (again, even though I didn't know at the time specifically who they were), and saw them *as light*, visualizing those lights becoming brighter and brighter.

x

[minor note . . .]

As a small aside, and again, this never passed through my mind while I was involved with this meditation, but in reading the original version of this section I realized that I have already written about something that is distantly similar to this situation in an earlier section of the book. Remember my talking about how a chela, when assigned, so to speak, to have contact with someone, would spend time meditating toward the individual in an attempt to make an inner connection (this was mentioned in conjunction with the young chela I believe I came into contact with in Benares)? In looking back, it seems as though my little meditation may have been doing something of a similar nature.

I haven't the power of a chela, nor the connection to a Master that a chela has, so my puny efforts were probably consonant with a fart in the wind, but it was something I felt moved to do. What's more, I'm pointing this loose parallel out ONLY because I noticed something unexpected when I moved in my mind toward my soon-to-be students.

I just assumed that every time I would project thought their way, it would be the same experience. But what I found was that once I had established my little link during those first few meditations, projecting a loving tone around them (so to speak) required *no concerted effort at all* even though (for the umpteenth time), I didn't know who they were, just *that* they were.

What loomed out at me was that I had already made the bridge connection after those first few efforts, and there was no longer the need to reinvent the wheel as far as that part of the effort went. Not unreasonable, but it was a surprise to me nevertheless.

Mind you, I don't think this would have worked in this way if I had been trying to approach their child-selves in an effort to influence, say, their daily behavior. Aside from the fact that most people don't have the juice to pull something like that off, THAT would have been a fairly dark use of mental energies in any case and not something I would have ever tried. As it stood, though, my directing energy at them really did seem to make an unexpected link . . .

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[another minor note . . .]

Side topic: Chelas know a ton, some of them are VERY powerful, and being in the presence of a chela would surely seem a blessing. Along with all of that, I *know* they interact with normal people in the world when appropriate. That said, one of the things they *don't* do is take on students in the same way a Master might.

The problem is that when a spiritual teacher instructs a student, the teacher takes on a certain amount of karma as a consequence of his or her teachings. If we are talking about Masters, who are truly enlightened, they have made a conscious decision to do this. That is what *turning back to help humanity* is all about, and that is what the *real* sacrifice of the Christs and the Buddhas was all about.

The point is, a Master who has chosen to do this, seeing clearly and fully the karmic path of his or her student, knows what is appropriate and inappropriate for his or her student in the way of assistance. You and I have no clue on that score, and chelas are not really there yet, either. What's more, chelas are still in the process of balancing their own karmic past, not creating extraneous *new* karma to carry around.

Bottom line: chelas do not take on students.

Chelas *can* extend blessing and healing energies to others, though, *and so can you*. It will mean a tiny karmic connection between you and the individual you attempt to help, so it must be done selflessly. As long as that is the case, you will be protected by your motivation.[15]

Where it gets tricky is when the child-self inserts its own personal desires and/or needs into the mix. Then things can become, if not outright dark, at least tinged dark. Your child-self and my child-self have no idea what karmic necessities exist for others, so trying to force an outcome, even one that seems benevolent, is not generally a good idea.

I saw an example of this when I was first around Kay. She had a friend, Frazier, who was fairly psychic and who had a considerable amount of healing energy about him. His wife, who I think he loved but who was someone he had grown apart from, had a stroke and probably should have died. I don't know if it was guilt or what, but he went to extraordinary lengths inwardly to pull her back into life. The consequence was that she lived for several more years, but only as a shell of a person and not a happy

[15] This is important. There is nothing wrong with wishing someone the best. The problem arises when the act is coupled with personal interests (and to be sure, the self is very good at hiding it's real motivations, so be careful with this).

one at that. He had forced things, he shouldn't have, and both he and she paid a price for it.

Having said that, Kay's group clearly projected a healing energy with the meditation they extended toward my mother during her "I'm one of the bad guys" episode. So when can you do something like that and when can't you?

It all has to do with motive. Kay's efforts on mom's behalf were perfectly selfless. She didn't want anything from mom, she was just trying to help. She didn't force things, all she and her group did was to give mom periodic respites during which mom could work within herself in peace . . . but it was mom who had to do all the heavy lifting.

I don't have nearly the juice or focus that Kay had (not to mention the group that was around her at the time), so the very few times I've projected a healing energy toward someone, I doubt seriously it has done anything substantial. And when I've given a blessing, I've been very circumspect in the sense that I realize that I'm no big whoop when it comes to spirituality, so all I can really do is acknowledge another Being above and beyond the personal-self, and project a hope that that self can get hold of itself and grow into a more fully developed, spiritually evolved child-self. I don't inject my own personal needs or desires into any of this. I do what I do as selflessly as I can.

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[continuing . . .]

So back at the ranch: Once I'd get done working toward my soon-to-be students, I would leave them and move on to others. Sometimes I'd project a blessing, coupled with an acknowledgment and an enhancement of their light, toward people I knew were in trouble. Sometimes I'd project a blessing toward people I didn't know but knew about, refuges, members of Congress who were actively moving in a dark way, individuals in war torn countries, individuals in our own country who were in strife, or maybe just friends and colleagues. And always, the blessing was an acknowledgement of the highest in them, never to the child-self.

At the end of *that* part of the meditation, I would do three things.

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[a bit of background for the first one . . .]

At one point, the Brothers gave us a tonal pattern that included colors that are associated with the seven major chakras (energy centers) of the body (some Sanskrit texts list eight major chakras; the Brothers only talked about seven).

The pattern started with the second chakra at the solar plexus, which is associated with *vitality* and what they called *the sun energie*s. It was to be visualized as sun-yellow. When doing so, the chakra was to be additionally visualized as rotating clockwise (this was true for all of the chakras), and the tone "oh" was to be pronounced either out loud or mentally without physical sound.

The focus went from there to the third chakra, located in the heart and called the "heart chakra," which is associated with *compassionate action*. This was to be visualized as light rose-red in color. When doing so, the tone was to escalate in pitch from the previous tone (this change was one step up on what is called *a major scale*, or so I was told by Rachel Dunham, my Honors Physics teaching mate and an excellent cellist), and was to be a "oo" (as in hoot) sound. It could *also* be pronounced either out loud or mentally without sound.

Next was the fourth chakra, located in the throat and called "the throat chakra," which is associated with *the creative energies* (speech being a manifestation of thought, which in turn is a manifestation of creativity). Its color was green and its tone was "e," escalated in pitch from the previous tone by the same amount as the previous jump.

Next was the fifth chakra, located in the back of the neck where the spine meets the cranium. It is called the "Web chakra" and is a kind of *central switching station* between the aura, the physical complex and the inner worlds. Its color was yellow and its tone was a long "a," escalated in pitch from the previous tone.

Next was the sixth chakra, located in the middle of the forehead. It is called the "third eye" and is associated with *wisdom*. Its color was purple and its tone was "i," escalated in pitch from the previous tone.

Next was the seventh and highest chakra, located at the top of the head. It is called the "crown chakra" and is associated with *spirituality*. It was visualized as a golden-white light.[16] Its tone was "ah," pitched three jumps higher than the previous tone.

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[16] Paintings of Christ or other spiritually evolved individuals with halos of light around their head are, apparently, unknowingly, nods to a crown chakra that is fully open.

Next in the series was the first chakra, located at the base of the spine. It is called, simply, "the lower chakra," and is associated with *the sexual energies*. It's color was blue and its tone was "you" pitched quite low.

And last in the series was back to the second chakra, the sun energies, with its "oh" sound, but pitched above the original pitch level of that chakra the first time around.

(All of this makes a lot more sense if you *hear* it done, which will be the case for people who listen to this book "on tape" . . . should I ever make that happen.)

The entire exercise is done softly over the course of *one breath*. That is, each tone with a momentary meditative acknowledgement of its associated chakra, its purpose and its color, is done one after another in the time it takes to expel one deep breath. It requires a certain amount of focus, but it is not as difficult as it sounds when done right. And because the individual doing the meditation is focused completely upon the significance of each chakra for those few instances, it is very peaceful.

Going through this sound and visualization progression, in other words, allows me to acknowledge with gratitude all that supports me as I prepare for the day.

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[finishing up . . .]

The second thing I do is considerably easier to explain. I simply flood my aura mentally with white light. I've found that visualizing white light behind me, in areas my eyes would not normally be able to see, is hardest. It is as though my small-self has hidden thoughtforms there, and doesn't want them observed. In any case, that is my second-to-last task before ending my meditation.

And lastly, with hands together in a prayer position that is not altogether different from the position you find Hindus take when giving greeting to one another (the word that is most often spoken on these occasions is *Namaste*, which is Sanskrit and alludes to the divine spark that resides in the heart chakra), I send my most sincerely humble gratitude for the presence of the Brothers in this world, and for the chelas who work selflessly

on behalf of humanity, and I give an apology for the sea of shortcoming that my small self embodies. It is, in a way, an acknowledgement that I have failed to move as far as they, but that someday, my child will move as it should . . . [17]

All of which brings me back to *why am I talking about all of this?*

Although there may be "advanced" things going on in the Wellness Movement that I am not privy to, the meditations I found there seemed to be devoted primarily to drawing the mind and body into some semblance of control. That is never a bad thing. And if someone receives a bit of peacefulness and good health in the bargain, that's a commonly held desire and I'm good with that, too. But if you have decided to follow a spiritual path, as the Brothers reminded in Chapter 11,

" . . . *you* have asked to be *uncommon*."

Meditation should not, for you, be a tool for stress release. For you, meditation should allow you to work for the whole of life, and from that allow you to move toward enlightenment *on behalf of the whole of humanity*.

Paraphrasing the Brothers, "A meditation from which you don't come out *a better person* is, in a cosmic sense, a wasted meditation."[18]

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[17] Several small addenda: After several weeks, an additional enlightenment came. It was, quite simply, the realization and acknowledgement that EVERYONE'S child-self wants the world to appear right by them, *just like me*! Keeping that in mind really helps me understand and deal with others, especially when it comes to those possibly Richard-centric students. Also, when I first started to do the meditation, I just did it. But when I began to write about it, I got self-conscious and the meditation changed. It was still useful. It was just a lot harder to do selflessly. Interesting how the child-self does what it does . . . And lastly, I noticed that when I project lovingness at someone, it's sort of like I'm projecting sympathy toward them.

[18] It's 2021 right now, and every morning before I get out of bed, over the last six or so months, I've done another "three breaths" exercise that has a meditative bent.

There are, according to the Brothers (and Eastern lore), great consciousnesses, Devas, residing within what is called the *Devic Kingdom*, whose task and duty is to hold steady in form and animate the plant kingdom upon which the animal kingdom depends for its existence on this level in this world. They are what the American Indians called the *nature spirits*. There are also Elementals within what is called the *Elemental kingdom* that do the same at the elemental (molecular) level (these also animate the winds and fire). Without the selfless holding to form of these Consciousnesses, we would neither be upheld in our form nor would we have available to us a stable place in which to experience. (Sadly, the Brothers told us that these great Beings were being horribly stressed, having to fight harder and harder to continue to hold to form as man moves in the way man is moving. I didn't put

two and two together at the time, but since then, watching all the super hurricanes and super fires and super tornadoes and super rains, what I think I'm seeing is those Being bending to mankind's necessity.)

So during the first in-breathing, with the thought of gratitude squarely in my mind, I acknowledge my dependence on the efforts of these Consciousnesses as they work quietly on my behalf. And as I exhale (as I had done in the meditation years earlier), I concentrate on enveloping each and every atom of air coming out of my body with that gratitude, so that those infused atoms might go out into the world, find like toned atoms, and be a blessing to whoever they come into contact with.

There are individuals within the Brotherhood who are working in the world right now whose task is to hold and support in meditation the thoughtforms of compassion, of kindness, of thoughtfulness and selfless action, so that those thoughtforms might be available to you and me as we navigate our way through this world of experience in matter. You have no idea how dark the world would be without their efforts, but I have an inkling. So my second breath holds an acknowledgement of the efforts of those Beings, working on behalf of myself and the whole of life, and I do *that* with a tone of gratitude. And when I exhale, I infuse each and every atom of air coming out of my body with that gratitude, so that those infused atoms might go out into the world, find like-toned atoms, and be a blessing to whoever they come into contact with.

And finally, I have a body that has done its duty to me for over seventy years. Nature and karma have put an incredible amount of energy and time and effort into making it function effortlessly. My heart beats without thought on my part. My hands work without pain. My legs support me when I walk (even with the hip replacement). My mind still works reasonably well. And even when my eyes don't focus as well as they used to, my brain accommodates and I get by. My body is old, and it sometimes give me a taste of how much pain it *could* generate should it choose to do so, but it doesn't so choose often. I have a lot to be grateful for in its service to me, which brings me to my third breath.

On the in-breath of that last breath, I acknowledge all the ways my body has allowed me to experience on this level, all the ways it has *not* made my life a living hell, and gratitude suffuses that in-breath. And when I exhale, I infuse each and every atom of air coming out of my body with that gratitude, so that those infused atoms might go out into the world, find like-toned atoms, and be a blessing to whoever they come into contact with.

Three breaths in gratitude. It doesn't take more than thirty seconds to do, but it highlights only an inkling of what I owe to all that supports me.

Chapter 24

Musings 10
Thinking and Thought-forms (Mystery Schools; Subtleties Under Subtleties)

[We are still talking thought, thought-forms and meditation, but in this chapter we will also spend time talking about the Brothers and what in ancient times were called *the Mystery Schools*.]

[Mystery schools and chelahood:]

Early on in this book, I talk about *what the Brothers do*. I started out by telling the story of Sadat's assassination. In that section, I concluded that part of the task of the Brothers and their chelas is to support all of the thought-forms associated with *the powers of light*—kindness, compassion, love, etc.—as they exist in the inner worlds.

Getting to a place in one's spiritual evolution where it is possible to do this kind of work in a focused, truly effective way, is not easy. It requires an enormous amount of control over the child-self and its motives, and it requires a serious amount of inner training.[1] In ancient times, that training was only available in what were collectively called *the Mystery Schools*.

[1] It is interesting how perspective comes into play here. I'm writing this, predictably, from the perspective of my child-self, a self that has wants and desires it doesn't want to relinquish and for which it will fight. To do what members of the Brotherhood do, from where I am sitting now, it looks as though one needs to "get control of the child-self." The reality is that the Brothers have moved to a point where their child-self has more or less grown up and is acting like a compatriot rather than an adversary. Chelas are not there yet, but they are a lot closer than you or me. The point is, for you or me it would be a question of controlling the child-self. For chelas, that need is not so much.

When I talked to my students about the Mystery Schools, I didn't tell them that these were places where the Brothers could be found. I did tell them what is known to history about them. Specifically, that the Mysteries had two levels to them, and that what was known as the *lesser Mysteries* were state-run in Greece (this is how historians know about them).[2] What I said about them in the E.Phil book is presented below:[3]

> Why do we know so little about the Mysteries? After all, we know at least some of their names: the Greek Eleusinian Mysteries; the Persian Mysteries of Mithras; the Druidic Mysteries of the Britons and the Gauls; the Greco-Egyptian Mysteries of Serapis; the Egyptian Mysteries of Isis and Osiris; the Christian Gnostic Mysteries; the Greek Mysteries of Orpheus and of Bacchus; and the Cabiric Mysteries of Samothrace (Note not in the E.Phil book: Samothrace is a small, desolate island in the Mediterranean upon which the enormous *Winged Victory* statue that currently resides in the Louvre Museum in Paris was found—the photo is of Kay's foot-and-a-quarter tall replica). And we know the names of some who partook of those repositories of knowledge: Plato, Socrates, Plotinus, Pericles, Apollonius of Tyana; some even believe that Christ spent some of his "lost years" in the Mystery

2 Many of the plays during Greece's "golden age" were morality plays out of the Mystery School designed to help normal people understand what it is to live a good life.

3 I wrote the E.Phil book in the early 1990's. I didn't do it to look cool or make money (in fact, I've never made a penny off the book). It was done solely as an accumulation of information for my students. The last several times I've read the section you are about to read, I've had the nasty feeling that some of the words weren't mine. It was as though I'd found some archaic text, taken notes, then later transferred the notes directly to the written page without first paraphrasing what was said (then, again, maybe I *did* paraphrase . . . ?). I asked one of the English teachers at Poly to run the sections I was uncomfortable with through Turnitin, a program that identifies plagiarism in written works and that is available to their department. Sure enough, the program found sections that had been copied. Unfortunately, they were sections I had taken directly from Alvin Boyd Kuhn's book, *The Lost Light*, all of which I had identified as such in the text. Having tried and failed to find unidentified sources for the words I have used, I can only surmise that I didn't lift anything inappropriately. Still, if it is found in the future to have been the case, my apologies for the bad form. Plagiarizing is never an acceptable thing to do, even if it was done inadvertently, mindlessly and without ulterior motives.

Schools of Egypt. But as for what was taught, we know very little because all Initiates of the Mysteries were bound by the *strictest oath of secrecy*.

Our knowledge of them comes from veiled clues deduced by examining the lives and doctrines of those we know were Initiates. Example: we can surmise that reincarnation was a part of the Mystery School teachings—the evidence (if evidence be the right word) is found in Plato's writings about the allusions Socrates made to the doctrine of rebirth, and in the Christian Bishop Origen's commentaries on that same doctrine (Origen was an initiate of the Eleusinian Mysteries).[4] What else might we conclude?

The inner structure of the mysteries was evidently based on two general levels, the Lesser Mysteries and the Greater Mysteries. The Lesser Mysteries probably focused on *moral virtues* and *the making of those virtues a part of the initiate's everyday life*. It's likely there was instruction in the sciences and astronomy. In addition, initiates of the higher levels of the Lesser Mysteries were probably introduced to a view of the *psychology*

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[4] Concerning Bishop Origen:

In Head and Cranston's *Reincarnation: The Phoenix Fire Mystery*, they say:

> Origen was "the most distinguished and most influential of all the theologians of the ancient church, with the possible exception of Augustine," writes the noted German theologian Adolf Harnack in his article on Origen in the Britannica. "He is the father of the church's science; he is the founder of a theology which was brought to perfection in the fourth and fifth centuries, and which still retained the stamp of his genius when in the sixth century (the church) disowned its author." At one time Saint Jerome considered Origen "the greatest teacher of the Church after the apostles," while Saint Gregory of Nyssa called him "the prince of Christian learning in the third century."

Why was this "prince of Church learning" excommunicated two hundred years after his death? Because, among other reasons, his view of the world was not "Christian" enough and, more to the point, he was one of the early Christian fathers who believed that Christ talked about reincarnation. This was clearly not acceptable to the later Christians leaders who fought and won the ecclesiastic battle that brewed around that doctrinal boogey man, so they excommunicated him. [I do spend time in the E.Phil book discussing the possibility that Christ talked about reincarnation (which he most certainly did), and about how most (but not all) of the information that might support that thought was expunged from popular Christian history by the early Christian hierarchy.]

of man as a spiritually evolving Being, and to some extent to the "powers" thought available to an awakened, realized individual.

The Greater Mysteries were considerably more serious. If the Eastern view we have been examining is accurate to reality, the lower-side of the child-self is a complex amalgam of wants, desires, natural and self-created instincts (both noble and not so noble), and "burdens" (i.e., habit patterns) developed in and accumulated over past actions. Through karma, life urges humans to deal with this spiritual hodgepodge slowly over great periods of time. For those who wish to move more quickly (i.e., for those who want to follow a spiritual path), this process must be accelerated. Severe psychological and emotional pressures are needed to pry open the aspirant's subconscious so that the self, through disciplines, can be cleansed.

In ancient times, those pressures were not naturally a part of everyday life. Sure, people had to worry about invasions, pestilence, disease, famine—all those good Biblical scourges—but the pace and the general complexity of ancient life was not intense in the same way it is today. The ancient peoples were not constantly being bombarded with the heavy sexual imagery that we are immersed in through our TV, movies, advertising, Internet, even our music. There wasn't the franticness, the tone of hurry we seem to have bought into in this age. They didn't have to cope with subtle (i.e., sub-clinical) physical, emotional, and psychological stresses that you and I unconsciously deal with all the time: the breathing of air from an atmosphere that has essentially been made into an airborne-pollutant cesspool; the living in a space awash in high intensity, artificially created electromagnetic radiation[5]; the drinking of water laced with chemicals; the eating of food that has lost most of its vitality due to land abuse (the using of nitrogen-based fertilizers to stimulate

[5] If our eyes were sensitive to radio and microwave radiation in the same way our eyes are sensitive to optical light, Mt. Wilson above my home in Pasadena, California, would look like the sun. We are being bathed in enormous amounts of electromagnetic radiation from the TV stations there. Although scientists claim there is no problem with this, we have absolutely no idea what the long-term effects on the body will be, not to mention the effects on the human psyche. Why? Because this situation has never existed on this planet previous to the last sixty-years. Power-intense electromagnetic radiation—high power radio and microwave radiation—is not a situation that happens naturally on earth (though we do occasionally get blasted by extreme radiation via solar winds from the sun).

the land into producing greater and greater yields . . . and greater and greater profits). People in ancient times certainly had problems, but their lifestyle hadn't the artificiality we endure. In a lot of ways, their lives were more natural, more simple.

That is why the Mystery Schools existed. They were, if this view is accurate, the places where men and women went who wished to move spiritually. Within those schools resided the real spiritual teachers, the *men of power* [special note—one that wasn't in the E.Phil book—the "men of power" in question here were the Brothers—also, see footnote that was likewise not in the E.Phil book[6]] who could bring to bear the deep emotional, psychological, and mental pressures required for one to proceed into the more advanced stages of spiritual enlightenment. These were not "feel good" places. There were places of serious, life and death, spiritual effort.

As expressed by Alvin Boyd Kuhn in his book, The Lost Light:

> All spiritual wisdom was held in secret brotherhoods and rigorously safeguarded from common dissemination. . . . . Sheer pious faith could not alone gain one admission into the Mystery Schools. Actual discipline of body and mind, and certain inner unfoldments of faculty were held as requisite for the grasp of deeper truths. Initiation was to some real extent a matter of the mastery of theurgic (i.e., inner world) powers dependent in the main upon purity of life. Esotericism (i.e., secrecy of doctrine) arose primarily from the necessity of safeguarding the use of dynamic knowledge . . . What we have derided as

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6 You might be wondering why I'm talking about "men of power" and not "women of power." To begin with, gender means nothing when you spend most of your time moving about and working in the *inner worlds*. What's more, when it comes to a realized Being, there is no real karmic necessity for one to animate a male body over a female body (or vice versa). That means the Brothers will animate whichever body type will most easily allow them to move in whatever part of the world they happen to work in. There have been evolved Being who have animated the female form—Quan Yen from the Chinese tradition and the Greek woman Hypatia being good examples (though the latter may have been a high chela). Evidently, though, the energetics of the auric complex around the male body is different from that of the female body, and given the tasks these advanced Beings are apt to take on, in many instances the energetics of a male body is easier to deal with.

"magic" in the religion of old was just the control of subtle powers which we mostly permit to slumber in dormancy beneath the surface of our superficial life.[7] Religion touched man so deeply in olden times that it awakened the potencies of his godlike endowment, an enterprise which concerns us rather little now. The imputation of sacredness to the rite of religion flowed directly from recognition of the vital issues at stake in the soul's incarnation on earth. And the right to participate in the higher mysteries, of which St. Paul speaks, belonged to those who had won it from nature by the payment of the full price—a life schooled to harmony by intelligent consecration of every personal force.

. . . (Consider) . . . the positive testimony offered by Plato, Porphyry, Apuleius, Herodotus, Plotinus, Proclus, Iamblichus, Euripides, and Cicero. Certainly a man like Cicero cannot be scorned when he testifies as follows:

> "There is nothing better than those (Lesser) Mysteries by which, from a rough and fierce life, we are polished to gentleness and softened. . . . not only have we received from them the doctrine of living in happiness, but even of dying with a better hope."

. . . . There is little or no evidence of esotericism, for the good reason that esotericism is the one thing in the world that is bound by its nature to leave little evidence! Do scholars expect that the members of the Mysteries would have published their secrets abroad? On the contrary, they were bound to secrecy by the severest of all pledges.[8]

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[7] (Footnote not in the E.Phil book: Interestingly, St Augustine was reported to have said, "Miracles are not contrary to nature but only contrary to what we know about nature."

[8] The Brothers told us that Alcibiades, the nephew and supposed successor to Pericles (Pericles was the preeminent statesman of Athens during Greek's golden age and sometimes referred to as "the first citizen of Athens"), was BANISHED from Athens for getting drunk one night and openly, loudly revealing some of the secret rituals of the Lesser Mysteries (the Brothers talked about this considerably before Google, but I Googled it years

I'm talking about the Mystery Schools here (primarly the Greater Mysteries) because in ancient times, that is where the Brothers worked with those who had moved to a point where it was karmically correct to come into contact with those who KNEW what "this place" was all about.

I'm not sure if this was obvious from the quote, but being a candidate in the Greater Mysteries was deadly serious and hardly a "normal" human experience. It was there that a chela, when ready, would have the opportunity to move in meditation (with the help of the Teachers) into the inner worlds to stand without protection against the very heavy thought-forms that permeate the thinking of humankind.

The prince Siddhartha Gautama, better known in the Western world as *the Buddha*, did something similar to this when he came into his enlightenment. Of course, what he did was considerably more intense than anything a chela might experience, but the idea was the same. I talked some about the Buddha's experience in my Eastern Philosophy book (I heavily borrowed both the wording and ideas from Arnold's The Light of Asia). What I said there follows:

> It is hard to know the kinds of things that went on in that meditation, but like Christ in the desert, it is believed that Temptation presented itself in every way possible. As Sir Edwin Arnold said in his book, *The Light of Asia*, "Mara (the personification of Temptation—also referred to as the Prince of Darkness) sent his mighty legions against (the teacher to be—our prince)."
>
> As the story goes, the coalesced presence of Fear enshrouded the steady-minded prince and, having probed with all its might, fell away unable to find a foothold within the prince's Being. Then came the terrible specter of Hatred, immense in its power and proportion having been fed by the thought-energy of every human who had ever exercised that most destructive of forces. No foothold did that terrible specter find . . .

Underneath the surface, thought-forms are a serious presence.

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later and although the particulars weren't identified in the Google article, the incident was known to history and the formal charge was, apparently, "sacrilege"). The exiling of a well-connected citizen . . . sounds pretty severe to me.

[Why?]

The Brothers exist and have their places within the world, but the Mystery Schools as formal entities are no longer in evidence. This is due to the fact that *life* in this day and age can provide all of the forces needed for an individual to move into the inner worlds without the help of an outside agent.

Example: Sex is essentially a mental activity. Sure, the act itself is pleasurable and memorable and all that, but what gets people most excited is *thinking* about sex. If it weren't so, masturbation would not be an option for the love deprived.

In the Buddha's meditation, he actually had the thought-forms of sex flow through and around him. All the sexy stuff you think about when sex is on your mind—all of that passed through his mind just as it does yours (that is what happens when you allow thought-forms to move through you). The Buddha was pure in his intention so the thought-forms had nothing to stick to (translation: he didn't meld into the thought-forms as you or I might because there was nothing within him that resonated with them). Still, they swirl around and through his thinking.

You don't *need* a Teacher from the Mystery Schools to open you up to that kind of experience anymore. All you have to do is live in today's world. There is sexual imagery everywhere. And if you aren't too observant and don't see it in your everyday life, all you have to do is go on the Internet. Every manner of visual stimulation is available there. There, you can link yourself to almost any thought-form you'd like. It really is true. Anyone who wants can have access to the pressures of the Mystery Schools (minus the presence of the Teachers). Today it's called *life*.[9]

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[9] I don't want to run this into the ground, but there is a subtlety here that needs to be highlighted. It is not uncommon for everyday folk to labor under the unconscious assumption that life for them now is the way life has always been. The reality is that the personal "event horizon" (metaphorically speaking) for people in today's world is immense in comparison to what it was a few hundred years ago (and yes, an *event horizon* is technically the outer boundary of a black hole; I'm using it here to denote what bounds people's awareness of their surrounding world). Back in 1776, it took five weeks for news of the Declaration of Independence to reach England. FIVE WEEKS! That means that three weeks after the Declaration was signed, people in England still thought America was there's free and clear. When things happen in the U.S. *today*, it takes seconds for the news to reach England.

The consequence of this is that your world has the potential of being much fuller in an *immediate-content* sense than was the case just a few hundred years ago. Extending this, imagine what it must have been like TWO-THOUSAND years ago. Just finding out what was happened a few villages away, if you cared enough to wonder, could have taken days.

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[I've been thinking and talking about *thought-forms* in the inner worlds, and about chelas, and about how chelas and the Brothers work to undo what the Dark Side has done with thought-forms in the inner worlds, and I've tried to make *the system* reasonably understandable . . . except it turns out it's a lot more complicated than I've made it out to be. What follows is my attempt to rectify that shortcoming.]

As pointed out above, when an individual asks to move ahead of the stream of humanity in a spiritual sense, the individual is asking for a very spooky thing. Why? Because the only way karma can move an individual along is to open that self up to itself. All of the sticking points within the Being must be looked at. Within a very short period of time, immense amounts of psychological and karmic stuff that would normally be dealt with over many, many lifetimes begins to bubble up to the surface. It all has to be looked at and dealt with if the individual is really going to proceed onward more quickly.

The sheer weight of the experience is enormous. (Think about all the things you've screwed up in this lifetime. What we are talking about here is the equivalent of becoming hypersensitized to all those things along with *all the things you've screwed up in all of your previous incarnations*. The magnitude and intensity has the potential to crush.) That is what is

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My point here is that you and I are constantly having our collective noses rubbed in what's happening in the world today. We know about global warming; we know about the efforts of some to keep a record of America's racist past out of the textbooks (we wouldn't, after all, want white children in the south to feel bad about themselves); we know about American communities that can't drink water out of their tap because it's infused with lead or PCB's or industrial pollution or agriculture runoff; we know when super-tornadoes and massive forest fires and thousand-year floods happen; we know about Gaza; we know about Putin and Ukraine; we know about the politics that led House Republicans to refuse aid to Ukraine (thank you Mr. Trump); we know there are children in our country who don't have enough food to eat on a daily basis (17% of the child population in the U.S., as of 2022, were food insecure).

All of this stuff is inside our personal "event horizon." In ancient times, to be a chela was to have that kind of event horizon, minimum, when normal people (which is to say, the rest of humanity) were still in the dark about almost everything. That is why the Mystery Schools were so important in ancient times. It was (among other things) where one's event horizon was expanded way, way, way beyond what it is for even a normal American today, complete with all the pressures that come with deep, penetrating knowledge. Chelas were and still are amazing Beings.

expected of a chela and, to a lesser degree, any individual who asks life and karma to help them move ahead of the stream of humanity in a spiritual sense.

So what more is there to know?

I talked about the Great Artificers in an earlier chapter, Awarenesses of such immensity and power that they create *out of their own thought* whole universes. When they thought our world system into existence, the need for duality was paramount (that's not to say that duality doesn't exist elsewhere, it's just to say it is really important for us). So along with the thought-forms for *contentedness*, for instance, they created the thought-form of *unhappiness*, and along with the emotion of *equanimity*, we have the emotion of *anger* (I'm not great with antonyms but this is close enough for government work).

Emotional anger in an individual normally acts like a flag telling its owner that there is something in the way he or she is dealing with life that needs to be looked at more closely. It is a dark thought-form in the sense that exercising it often causes havoc, but in its primordial form, it is not a bad thing. It has its use cosmically. It can be a tool for those who want to more completely understand their child-self.

My point is that there is nothing anyone can do to remove this "archetypal" thought-form from the pantheon of thought-forms generated by the Artificers to be made available for human use. It is there for a purpose and it is there as it should be.

If that was all there was to it, human use of that thoughform would be straightforward. Life (karma) would bring stressful experience to an individual who, living in ignorance (i.e., not understanding life), would react typically with emotional anger in the self. The flag would be raised and, hopefully, the individual would do the appropriate looking and coming into some sort of enlightenment about the self as a consequence. The thought-form would be fed with the personal energy of the animator, all of which the actor would be responsible for. That addition of energy would also grow the thought-form just a little bit in the process, and the incorporation of that energy into the thought-form would help karma keep track of the individual's actions over lifetimes.

(As a small aside, as an individual becomes more and more adept at *existence in matter,* the individual's actions will, by their very nature, balance out the energies fed into the negative side of thought-forms like

anger, nullifying their contribution and effect on the whole of life. This balancing of energy will happen naturally and has to happen before an individual can come into the enlightenment of the Buddhas.) [10]

As I suggested above, if this was all that was happening, things would be fairly simply. Unfortunately, there is the Dark Brotherhood to contend with. They are Beings who have so completely dedicated themselves to the path of *self-involvement* and *the accumulation of power for the self* that they have pretty much dug a karmic hole for themselves out of which they (the Dark Ones) believe they will never be able to climb. As they are still *bound by karma* (which angers them enormously), their efforts are not unlike a spurned lover who just wants to strike out at anyone in sight (my analogy, not the Brothers).

Part of this *striking out* presents itself as the continuous pouring of energy into thought-matrixes associated with personally selfish action and actions that cause chaos. In the vernacular, they meditate on the thought-forms of *anger* and *vengeance* and *hatred* and *mistrust*, and in doing so they feed those forms (and others) making each bigger and stronger and more able to infect the minds of the unaware than would normally be the case. As I said, they do it because they are angry and want to cause as much pain and disruption as possible.

This is why, when some people *get mad*, there is at least the possibility that in short order, they may become *furious*.[11] Because as the individual's *waiting points* open into the inner worlds, and as they link into the thought-form of *anger,* they aren't just dealing with their irritation and, maybe, the irritation of people who have had similar experiences down

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[10] I'm not going to explain this well as I don't completely understand its mechanics, but eastern tradition suggests that an individual trying to move along a spiritual path can *burn off karma* (help to balance this karmic energy-debt thing) by experiencing short, extreme lives. When I said there were "other" reasons why someone might find themselves in a terrible situation in life—remember that child in a war-torn country—this was one of those possibilities. But even if something like that is a possibility, as always, that doesn't mean you shouldn't help someone like that out if karma puts you in a position to do so . . .

[11] If you know anything about modern medicine, you may be drumming your fingers on the table right now thinking that mood swings like that are the consequence of brain function. After all, you can take someone with *borderline personality disorder*, a situation in which an individual can, in a flash, become irrationally angry (then won't remember what they've done afterward) and "make them better" with drugs that work on the brain.

All of that is true, but it misses the point. You can surely use drugs to dull (or magnify) the workings of the brain, but that doesn't mean you've addressed the problem's ACTUAL underlying mechanism.

through the ages, they are dealing with thought-energy that has been *purposely put there* by the Dark Side specifically to swamp and throw out of control the unaware[12] (and there is clearly a karmic element here, also).

Remember when I said earlier that we depend upon and are affected by *thought* from the inner worlds more than we know? This, in part, is

[12] This is oh such an odd thing to drop here, but it's so apropos. People are so, so, so easily swamped. It is 2016, and Fox News (which isn't really a news agency so much as a conservative propaganda machine contrived by Rupert Murdoch) regularly presents to the American public a stream of thought-forms that are not based in fact, but that do align with what conservatives want to believe. The consequence is "news" coverage that makes statements over and over again that are completely untrue, or that are half-truths, but that become truths in the minds of the viewers simply because they are repeated so often: untruths about Barack Obama's citizenship; untruth's about the scientific consensus concerning Global warming; untruths about Planned Parenthood; untruths about Clinton's responsibility for Benghazi; untruths about everything imaginable. It's easy to conclude that Americans who don't see through this kind of subterfuge are just stupid, but the reality is that Americans are like everyone else. They are easily swamped with thought-forms that are forcefully presented, especially if the thought-forms resonate with the sympathies of the individual to start with (if they are fearful, for instance, or angry) . . . and that is exactly what Fox News capitalizes on.

That penchant to look the American public straight in the eye and lie through one's teeth, making an untruth a truth in the minds of the unaware, was even more powerfully exemplified during the 2016 Republican National Convention. During that shameful event, I heard Republican after Republican state how much the party was concerned with the welfare of the American people when, in fact, Republican voting record showed concern for the gun lobby and big business and the rich, but no such concern for the majority of Americans an enormous number of whom are simply trying to keep their head above water. Reinforce a thought-form often enough and people will accept it as a reality.

It doesn't take an enormous intellect to see the signature of the Dark Side in all of this (though that doesn't mean any one individual associated with the situation is one of the Dark Brothers—I suspect *they* are more inclined to pull strings from the shadows, so to speak, exploiting the personal weaknesses of the individuals involved). The point is that thought-forms are potent creatures. They really can (and do) substantially affect the tenor of an individual's life.

. . . And for those of you who are thinking that the Democratic Party is just as corrupt as is the Republican Party, that is kind of a moot point. The Dark Side will "exploit the personal weaknesses" of anyone in power, Democrat or Republican. I mention the Republicans here because there is a basic difference between the two parties. The Democrat's mindset is generally humanitarian in nature; they are interested in helping everyone in the country to survive, the poor included. The Republican mindset is wrapped around the manufacturing of wealth. If that is what you do, they are interested in supporting you. If not, their interest in you extends only so far as they have to go to get your vote. So even though the individuals populating each party are just as vulnerable to the Dark Side as anyone else, there is a very basic difference in the way the two parties look at the world, and that difference has allowed some pretty icky stuff to ooze out of the Republican side that you don't so much see on the Democrat's side.

what I was talking about.

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[Which brings us back to chelas and the Brotherhood . . .]

The first vow of chelahood is *to work for the whole of humanity without thought of recompense*. As the Brothers used to say, chelas *live in the world but are not of the world*. One of the things that makes them different, once they have moved their child-self into a state of being a *compatriot* rather than an *adversary*, is that they spend enormous amounts of time, effort and energy attempting to diminishing the power of dark thought-forms. They do this by pulling the energy out of them when they (the thought-forms) present themselves in everyday experience and flow through the chela, much like experience flowed through the Buddha in his great meditation (or like experience flows through you and me in everyday life).

Chelas don't resonate with these thoughtforms, not only because they have come into such a deep understanding of themselves and life that there is no longer the necessity for them to do so, but also because they have a truly, deeply held compassion for the whole of life. As such, they don't feed these thought-forms in the same way you or I might, even though doing so may be the norm within society. In that, they not only deprive the negative thought-forms of energy they depend upon to survive beyond their original intent, they reinforce in their place thought-forms that are positive and constructive.

Having been trained, they do all of this with power. And as they are dedicated to the whole of life without thought of recompense, they do it twenty-four/seven, three-hundred and sixty-five days a year *for whole lifetimes*. Chelas are not perfected Beings, but that doesn't make them any less remarkable.[13]

I certainly haven't been trained or prepared to do this at the level

[13] If you'd like to see how you'd stack up against this level of devotion to duty, pick a simple walking meditation (something truly trivial like counting the number of blue shirts you encounter during the day, or something not so trivial like not mentally drifting during your day) and see how long you can hold it. You may last a day or a week or two, or even a month, but when you fail (and you most probably will fail), imagine holding that level of attention for your entire life. That is the kind of dedication chelas bring to the table, and if you try the walking meditation I mentioned above, you will SEE how freaking amazing chelas are.

of a chela, but the few times I have mentally linked myself to dissonant thought-forms that move around others it has been quite dislocating. It is (again) quite amazing what chelas do.[14]

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[We are all one.]

One of the chelas we regularly came into contact with through Kay was a woman who lived in Egypt (I talked about her earlier). One day she said to the group, "Never animate any thought or take any action that will support the Dark Side."

It got me to thinking. Look at your index finger. Wiggle it. Notice how autonomous it appears to be—an entity unto itself. As an individual entity it may not be terribly concerned with its neighbors, but it is not alone. It is inextricably linked to the four other digits of your hand, if in no other way than in its usefulness.

A human being is a lot like that finger. We appear to be autonomous creatures, yet we are connected inwardly to all that is, other humans included, in a very intimate way. We share karma. We share thought-forms whether we choose to animate them or not. We share a common origin to which we will all return at some point in time. In short, as little obvious as is the depth of this sentiment, anything you do to diminish the quality of another's life affects in a substantial way the quality of your own life, just as anything one finger does to hurt its neighbor affects the whole of the hand.

So back we go to the chela's comment about animating dark thought-forms. Thought-forms impinge upon and affect the inner life of every human on the planet, not to mention all of the Awarenesses of Nature that must support you and me in our effort to learn to deal with *existence in*

[14] When Cathy read this, she asked that I expand a bit on the "dislocating" comment. I had a girlfriend for a short time after meeting Kay and the Brothers. When we broke up, I wasn't devastated but I was mildly unhappy. As I was driving on the Golden State Freeway toward mom's house in Newhall a few days after the break-up, I remember getting a wild hair and deciding to send my mind out to touch every individual in the country who was similarly unhappy. The heavy blanket of emotion that came back my way was nearly overwhelming. Such anger, such pain, it was palpable, and it was all right there in front of me. That chelas are sensitive on this level, and that they work to disperse these clouds of emotion on behalf of you and me, is quite remarkable.

matter. Everything is interconnected on the inner levels. Deep within the confines of the Divine Mind (God), we are one unit.

According to the Bible, Jesus said, "Love thy brother as you would love thyself." In doing so, he wasn't just spouting mindless platitudes. He was pointing to a metaphysical truth. Anything you do to another, you do to yourself.[15] Any time you feed dark thought-forms by animating them, you support and increase their ability to affect the minds of others. In turn, this affects you. More to the point, if others fail, you fail.

In short, you are not, as appearances suggest, alone. And even though I had no idea how deep the statement was at the time, it isn't surprising that the chela said to us, "Never animate any thought or take any action that will support the Dark Side."

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[This is a minor point that isn't, for me, so minor.]

In one of the meetings, the Brothers said something that really stuck with me. They said, "When you carve out a small place of safety and security for yourself in the world, on the edge of that place there will be weeping."[16]

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[15] This, completely ignoring the fact that any situation you create for your own benefit that additionally messes up others may well be a situation you, yourself, will be reincarnated into at some time down the line. There is no better way to make a person "on top" realize that, say, putting forth selfish, racist policies is wrong, than to have the individual find him or herself the recipient of those same policies down the line. That is certainly not the only way karma might deal with someone like that, and it certainly isn't the only reason karma might draw someone into a life of dire strait, but it is one of them.

[16] This quote has popped into my head over and over again during the last few weeks (it's 2009). According to the media, there are 47,000,000 Americans without health care insurance. The Obama administration has been trying to remedy the problem by coming up with Health Care reform. Consequently, pharmaceutical companies, the insurance industries, the American Medical Association (i.e., doctors), hospitals, lawyers, they all have been throwing money and influence in every direction trying to stifle any change that might saddle the considerable profits each have become accustomed to making over the years. All the while, the Republican party, in its desire to regain the power it lost due to its horrific, self-indulgent mismanagement of just about everything over the last eight years with the Bush administration, are doing everything in their power to sabotage Obama's efforts and keep alive their hope of defeating him in the 2012 election. And even the Democrats, who have a majority in both houses of Congress, have individuals within their party who are so worried that they might be defeated in their next election that *they* are stalling things. Everyone is carving out a place of security and safety for themselves, leaving in all proba-

Let me say it again: *When you carve out a small place of safety and security for yourself in the world, on the edge of that place there will be weeping*.[17]

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bility that 47,000,000 Americans dangling. Everyone is so worried for themselves. It is no wonder that the Brothers have found so few new chelas over the centuries.

[17] I normally think about this in the context of individuals, but it also applies to circumstances on a much larger stage. As a preamble: I was teaching my first-period AP Physics class at Poly on the morning of September 11, 2001, and around 9:00 AM one of my students got a notification on his cell phone motivating him to say out loud, "Oh my God! It looks like someone flew a plane into one of the World Trade Center towers in New York City." I somehow had the image of a Cessna being flown into the tower (not a 767), but in any case my immediate reply was, "You can't treat people badly and expect they aren't going to want to hit back at you." This rather odd response was prompted by my knowledge of some of the ways our government has manipulated other countries for its own ends, even authorizing the CIA to assassinate foreign leaders all the way back into the 1950s. Was it any wonder there might be people out there whose anger (not to mention weeping) over our actions might motivate them to want to cause us harm?

I only uttered those words once (I'm happy that was the case as we had one Poly alum die in the attack, and I certainly wouldn't have wanted to diminish his tragedy). Still, as a country, we have become very good at "carving out a safe space for ourself, complete with weeping at its edges . . . " (just think about what we did to the American Indians).

On a little different note: All the way back in 1917, there was a movement within the British government to give the Jewish people a homeland, a state where Jews could live in relative safety. After World War I, Britain gained administrative control over Palestine. Then World War II happened, complete with the Holocaust, and finally in 1948 (with the backing of the United Nations and the United States) Britain partitioned Palestine into three regions. One region was designated for an Arab state, one for a Jewish state, and the final region was the city of Jerusalem (this was designated a multinational city). Almost immediately, the Jews formed the Jewish state of Israel. For all sorts of reasons, the Arabs did not form a state of their own.

One of the many things that is important to know about all of this is that the Jews did not conquer the land that became Israel, it was given to them. The rub was that in doing so, 700,000 Muslims had to be displaced from their ancestoral homes. Think about that. Imagine owning a home in which your great, great grandfather was born, in which your great grandfather was born, in which your grandfather was born, in which your father was born, in which you were born and in which your children were born. Then imagine a government official showing up one day to evict you so a Jewish family could move into that house. That was done to 700,000 Muslims. (Kay told me in the late 1970's that she knew a Palestinian man who still carried around with him the keys to the house he had owned in Palestine that had been forcibly taken from him.) Is it any wonder there are Muslim extremists who want to see the end of Israel? Even though the land was a gift from the British, when you carve out a place of safety and security for yourself, on the edges of that place there will be weeping. (And for those of you who accept the Jewish claim that "God promised us this land," I have a little something to say about that in the next footnote.)

Continuing: With the creation of the Jewish state, most of those displaced Muslims moved as refugees to neighboring countries or to the Gaza Strip or the West Bank. The

Muslim nations that surrounded Israel had a choice. Their hearts could go out to the immense travail and suffering the Jews had experienced during WWII (not to mention throughout the centuries) and, in empathy, accept this partition with a vow to take in those Muslim refugees, giving them a comfortable home and making sure their experience in life would be good, or they could immediately go to war with Israel in an attempt to gain back the "stolen" territory. As many would have done in our world today, they chose the latter path. They lost that war. The state of Israel has had its heel on the neck of the Palestinian people (to the considerable suffering, weeping and anger of those people) ever since.

Somewhere around 2006, Hamas, a radical militant Palestinian group whose stated goal was and still is *death to Israel*, gained political control in Gaza. They have since refused to allow elections, preferring to strong-arm Palestinians who didn't agree with their policies and actions. On October 7, 2023, Hamas did a terrible, terrible, terrible thing. They attacked several of the Israeli settlements on the border of Gaza and butchered men, women and children—1200 of them—in a ghastly show of inhumanity. Both the Israeli government and news agencies in the United States initially labeled the attack as "barbarism" (which it was) and maintained that the horror of the mutilations and rapes and the ferocity of the killings could only have been carried out by sub-human, truly evil, soulless terrorists (in fact, Hamas was designated a terrorist organization by the United States in 1997). Israel's government vowed revenge, and for a month Gaza (whose total land area is around 25 square miles) was bombed into the dark ages with more than 11,000 Palestinians (over 4000 of which were children) being killed by the offensive. In the first month, Israel dropped 50,000,000 pounds of munitions in 12,000 air strikes—this is two-thirds the number of bombings the U.S. carried out in Afghanistan in the entire first year of it war there.

The Brothers were asked in the late 1970's how they would deal with the Israeli/Arab situation (obviously way before the October 7th attack). They suggested that sending Jewish doctors into the poor areas of Palestine where medical treatment was badly needed would be a good start. They said some might die, but with time the people there would come to see the Jews as benevolent actors and, again, with time, the anger and tensions would diminish. There were some within the Jewish community who tried to take steps similar to this (maybe even with some chela involvement), but unfortunately that was not the path Israel's *leaders* chose to take. Their recipe for success was to meet any show of defiance with overwhelming (some would say unreasonably overwhelming) force. It was clearly a nod toward the mindset that said, "If you attack us, we will inflict so much pain on you that you will never consider attacking us again." Unfortunately, as the Nazis learned during WWII with their blitz of England, that kind of primitive thinking (i.e., thinking you can beat your opponent into submission) doesn't work on people who are proud and stubborn and are able to accept and normalize being treated badly (not to mention a people who believe that dying in a conflict like this is an act of martyrdom and an immediate ticket to heaven). So instead of cowing the Palestinian people, all the Israelis managed to do was to enrage them even more, sending the less evolved of them (to the great delight of the Dark Side) toward vengeance. Bottom line: As I said above, it's October of 2023 and Israel, once again, finds itself in the middle of still another war.

Addendum: It is interesting how the Dark Side works. The Palestinians could have taken the path *His Holiness the Dalai Lama* took when China so egregiously commandeered Tibet, but they didn't. They heard the whispers of revenge, most certainly animated and fortified by the Dark Side, and they acted on those thought-forms. And the Israelis could have taken the stance of the benevolent father-figure and worked to make Gazan's lives bearable,

Also, I promised a quick word about God in the last footnote. Here it is. [18]

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even in the face of the evil wrought by Hamas, but they didn't. Ever since its inception, there has been a faction within the Israeli government that has had no interest in making peace with or accommodating the Palestinian people (again, I'm sure, with the Dark Side's blessing). As a consequence, over the years both sides have had factions within their ranks that have sabotaged efforts for peace. (One of the more grievous actions has been instigated by Jewish settlers—over 450,000 of them—who, with the blessings of the Israeli governments, have illegally seized and homesteaded Palestinian land in the West Bank.)

The Palestinian people have been so beaten down that as of 2023, 77% of Palestinians favor a peaceful resolution and an acceptance of Israel as a nation. That, unfortunately, didn't fit into Hamas's world-view perspective. Years earlier, Egypt, a Muslim nation, acknowledged Israel's right to exist normalizing ties with Israel. This was a blow to all Palestinian radicals as Muslim outrage at the confiscation of Arab land in the original action of 1948 was one of the few arrows in their quiver. Having that set aside in favor of peace was not something they wanted to see happen. As of a few months ago (again, it's November, 2023), Saudi Arabia was poised to put another nail in the resistance's coffin by doing the same as Egypt, acknowledging Israel's right to exist and forging diplomatic relations. So how to stop that from happening?

I think Hamas counted on the Israeli government's tendency to overreact whenever there is any aggression toward its people. And how to exploit that? They did it by launching an attack that was absolutely outrageous (thereby ensuring an Israeli response), one in which innocent Jews (civilian men, women and children) were butchered wholesale. Of course, Israel's current leader, Netanyahu, took the bait and the indiscriminate killing of Muslim civilians within Gaza via aerial bombing began. In doing so, not only was the world let in on the Israeli government's callous dealings with the Palestinian people as a whole, any Muslim nation thinking about normalizing relationships with the Jews was stymied. As evil as Hamas's actions were, it played the Israeli government like a fiddle . . . and we have the Dark Side coupled with sadly weak (in a cosmic sense), self-involved minds to thank for it. (And I reiterate, there are some very good, benevolent souls in the Jewish world—it is the actions of their leaders, in my opinion, who are making the Jews look bad.)

[18] I took time in the E.Phil book to talk about the likelihood that the ideas most religions have about God are reasonable. What follows is what I said.

> My first trip to Europe was a delight for many reasons, but it held an additional, unexpected treat that wasn't on my itinerary. As my Rome-bound flight cruised at 35,000 feet through crystal clear skies over the Atlantic, I looked out my window at the horizon and was surprised to see the earth's curvature. It was ever so slight, but it was there . . . and it really surprised me.
>
> Why? Because by extending the curve in my mind's eye, I could feel the enormity of the great circle that bounds our planet. In a very first-hand, personal way, I realized what most people only know intellectually: that in comparison to the six-foot high creatures that strut upon its surface, the earth is big.
>
> After some time, my mind switched gears and I began to look at the situ-

ation from a whole new perspective. As amazing as the earth is, what with life practically screaming its presence out into the universe, the earth really is only a middling size planet, one of nine (now eight with Pluto's demotion) relatively minuscule chunks of stuff that orbit our star, the Sun.

Now the sun, that's big! . . . sort of. It would take 110 earths to span the Sun's diameter, requiring over 700,000 earths to fill it. Yet as stars go, it isn't all that spectacular. For instance, the constellation Orion (the Warrior) has in its left shoulder a star named Betelgeuse. Betelgeuse is a red super-giant whose diameter varies over a three-year period from 400 to 600 times that of our sun. That means that if Betelgeuse were at the center of our solar system, we'd be inside it. It's tough to believe, but our sun is really a pretty puny star, just one of the approximately two-hundred-billion (200,000,000,000) or so stars that reside within our galaxy, the Milky Way (note not in the E.Phil book: that number is now put closer to 100,000,000,000).

Now the Milky Way, *that* is big. It takes light traveling at 186,000 miles per second approximately 110,000 years to go from one side of the Milky Way to the other. But how special is it?

Well, . . . it isn't. The Milky Way is a normal size galaxy, just one in the hundred-billion galaxies that are in range of the Mt. Palomar telescope (another note not in the E.Phil book: some astronomers believe we've "missed" a bunch of galaxies and the number is really in the trillions).

I do believe human life—all life for that matter—is wondrous, but as I hurtled toward my European adventure I came to an unwitting conclusion: What we're really talking about when we discuss mankind in relationship to the cosmos is an itsy bitsy creature that exists on an absolutely minuscule bit of nothing (the earth) that orbits a so-so size star (the Sun) that is one of the approximately 200,000,000,000 stars in a galaxy that is one of the 100,000,000,000 galaxies (minimum) that we know exist.

Having made those observations:

—Does it make sense to expect a Creator with the wherewithal to generate such a minutely complex, yet monumentally immense structure as a universe to pick the highly imperfect residents of one tiny planet to be the pinnacle (not to mention *center*) of Its creation? [Note not in the E.Phil book: And if Christians, for instance, believe everything revolves around mankind, does that mean God created all of those thousand-trillion stars in the heavens just so man would have a pleasant, sparkling night sky to look at. If so, all I can say is WOW (this being what women say when they can't believe the man they are talking to could be that stupid . . . though clearly there are a lot of Christians who aren't stupid, just not very good at putting two-and-two together sometimes).]

—Would you expect a Being of such depth to be so shortsighted and wasteful as to arbitrarily choose a tiny subset of Its creation on that planet to be "saved," warts and all, while mysteriously condemning the rest to the suffering of hellfire and damnation? In fact, would you expect a Consciousness on that level to be so ill tempered and impatient as to damn *any* of Its creation for improprieties enacted during one, short, often difficult lifetime?

—Can you envision such a Being as being impotent in the face of what

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[More about thought-forms, moving in the inner worlds and grounding oneself.]

I remember seeing a movie several years ago in which a disturbed girl kept talking about going to her "happy place." The idea was that she had this series of thoughts that she could focus on when she was down. Animating those thoughts would take her to a place where her take on life was lighter and everything was better.

Interestingly, the Brothers once told us that during deep meditation, it is important to have within one's array of easily accessible thought-forms at least one that has a grounding effect. What they said was that when you move around in the world of thought, especially if you go deeply into meditation, it is easy to get so absorbed in what you are experiencing that you essentially get lost. To deal with the problem, having a mental anchor is important.

This probably sounds wildly New Age, but it isn't as foreign to your experience as you might expect. Watch the way you think. What do you perceive going on when you think? Try to do it when you get mad, or when you see someone you find sexually attractive, or when you are engrossed in a good book. In all of these cases, you are submerged in the world of thought and, being so, pulling yourself out at the drop of a hat is not always easy (even with the book, putting it down does not mean you've stopped thinking about the story).

The first time I really noticed this had to do with females. When I was young, I was as randy as the next guy. I didn't succeed that often, but when I did come across a female who was into me and who I found attractive, I

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we humans rather pathetically call evil?

—Would you expect It to be swayed by prayers that amount to special favors for personal gain?

—And above all, does it make sense that such a Being would go to the trouble of creating a universe like ours without a damn good reason?

It's hard to imagine any Being with the juice to generate all the stars that evidently exist in our universe—20,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 plus (again, minimum)—to act in any of the above-mentioned ways, yet many people apparently so believe . . . which brings us to the Jews and their belief that a tribal God, THEIR God, promised them the land of Palestine. I can see how comforting it would be to believe that God has chosen you above all others, but really?

noticed there was a very strong, mental tone that would come around me that would draw me into a very definite, specific pattern of thinking.

I noticed it especially strong with the last girlfriend I had before I went cold turkey with the Brothers. It was as though a large part of me was lulled to sleep, and there I was, acting instinctively, mindlessly, with little mental control over anything. It was like being swept along in a fast moving, flood-engorged river.[19]

If you are going to work in the world as a male and you want to follow a spiritual path, especially if you are going to work with women who might be sexually attractive, how do you deal with this? You need an anchor to call forth when that tone-thing begins to happen.

Not that I was terribly successful, but the anchor I attempted to hold onto when it came to women was this: "Every human on the planet has a history. A sexually attractive woman isn't just a pretty face and fine body. Behind the body is a Being who has animated a long line of choices and interactions that have brought her to where she is now. *She has her story*. In a karmic sense, given the immensity of this place, there is little chance that her necessity is to interact with me in any way beyond the superficial. In any case, she needs to be allowed to find her way and her place on her own *without hindrance from me*."

It's not Shakespeare, and I haven't always been able to pull it off, but when I am in the proximity to an attractive woman while being additionally attuned to the moment, the words *she has a story* reminds me that I'm not just looking at a piece of meat. It pulls me away from wandering into fantasy. It grounds me. It has, once again, been a very useful *walking meditation*.

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[Focusing thought at someone.]

Although it isn't immediately evident to most, a trained mind can project thought-energy in an extraordinarily potent way. I remember being in that divided state I talked about earlier—allowing experience to flow through me while quietly watching in another part of myself as it happened—and having a receptionist in a restaurant mistakenly seat a group

[19] As I was re-reading this, a picture of Beavis and Butthead popped into my head doing that breathy, stutter-laugh they do, saying, "He said *engorged*." Adolescent humor—you gotta love it!

that arrived after us before us. When I realized what had happening, in a flash, my lesser self (which is to say *myself*) projected an enormous amount of energy at her via a blistering glare. It registered with her. I'm sure part of it was her noticing the glare, but in that split state I could actually *feel* energy flowing outward toward her. It was not a good thing.

Fortunately, because you and I are not particularly focused, doing something like that is kind of like farting in the wind. Nevertheless, if the Brothers are correct about things, thought-energy projected at someone can affect them, and that effect can and will have karmic repercussions.

_____x_____

[This is one last tale having to do with thought. It has to do with something I wrote about in the E.Phil book. I have copied some of it verbatim with other parts tinkered with. I'm not going to bother with quotes. It is all mine.]

When I first began with the Brothers [clearly, the tinkering I was talking about refers, in part, to the fact that I'm acknowledging the Brothers here—I obviously didn't do that in the E.Phil book], I knew little about meditation. I wanted to learn, though, and the Brothers did emphasize the need for each of us to generate our own disciplines. So on a lark, more from curiosity than anything else, I decided to try to meditate on an idea and see where it took me. The idea I chose was, "What did Christ mean when He said, 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.'"

I chose that phrase because the words seemed self-explanatory, and because I saw no reason to choose something that was outwardly obscure. My approach was straight-forward: I sat down for five minutes every night just before bed and quietly considered the admonition.

During the first few nights, I looked to see how the words were related to the way I was living my life. Each night thereafter, I would quickly review what I had seen the nights before, then attempt to push into the idea more deeply. I did this for almost four weeks. Then one night, something unusual happened.

Two minutes into the meditation, my mind just elevated, rotated, and suddenly I was seeing the words *from an entirely different perspective*. It took me completely by surprise. One moment I was looking at the same old phrase, the next moment I found myself staring into a meaning and significance that was as different from the old as night is from day.

And just as it was happening, I remember thinking, "My God, Christ didn't mean *that*, He meant *THAT*!"

I continued with the discipline. Each night I would re-consider the superficial meaning of the words (that interpretation was still there should I choose to select it), then I would elevate into the more expanded, subtle perception and continue to delve from there.

Three weeks later, I was surprised and amazed to find it happen again. In the blink of an eye, everything changed. From looking at the quote from what I thought was the "new, terribly insightful perspective," I went to an even more profound, expanded view. "I'll be damned," I thought, "Christ didn't mean *THAT*, He meant *THAT*!!!"

All three perspectives were complete unto themselves, but each had an entirely different level of subtlety to it. Yet if I'd been asked to choose words that most completely embodied the wisdom cradled in each, I could not for the life of me have come up with a better phrase *for any one of them* than, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." That phrase said it perfectly for each very different stream of thought.

It was at that time that I realized what subtlety lay at the heart of thought.[20] When the Zen Buddhists say, "The moment you speak the word, you miss the mark," they are dead on. Thoughts are like water. Words are like giant, irregular boulders. Trying to use words to hold ideas fully is like using irregular boulders to build a wall to contain water. The boulders won't do, and beyond a superficial level, neither will words.[21]

There is subtlety underlying subtlety when it comes to thought. Meditation is a tool you can use to meld into subtlety. You can try to use words to tell others what you have seen, but they have to *be there* before your words will mean to them what they mean to you. It's not for nothing that the Buddha started all of his teachings with, "Thus I have seen . . . ," the implication being that although what He says may make sense on the surface, only when you get to his state of enlightenment will you *really*

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[20] The E.Phil chapter that this comes from is one of the chapters devoted to Meditation. The question asked there was, "How can a Teacher (a Christ or a Buddha) who has seen to the heart of life tell people who haven't gotten there yet what they have seen?" It's a fun chapter.

[21] I alluded to this problem when I feebly tried to explain my perception of Europe by saying it was like, "walking through a psychic fog." When I said that, I knew the words weren't going to catch the real thoughts, but all I could do was the best I could do.

understand what is lying dormant behind his words.[22] [23]

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[22] This is why I suggested you read the quotes from the Brothers (Chapter 11) slowly over a period of time. There is, as I said, meaning there underneath meaning underneath meaning.

[23] This has to do with thought-forms in the inner worlds, so I'm including it here.

My friend, Mike, managed to get his head thoroughly scrambled with drugs while in college at the University of California, Santa Barbara (he was so messed up that he couldn't pass his last Chemical Engineering class and didn't graduate). ASU's Spring Break usually happened before UCSB's, so during Spring Break of my sophomore year I got home, then went up to visit him. He was renting a house in Isla Vista (population of around 15,000) where lived most of the off-campus UC students. During the weekend I was there, he and his roommates had a party. Early on, a tray with a vast assortment of drugs was made available to anyone interested. I didn't know what I was doing, but I was game so I tried *mescaline*. Mescaline is a psychedelic similar to LSD and psilocybin. It was quite a trip (mind bending), but as I was coming down it was as though there was a whispering in the back of my head saying, "Wasn't that wonderful? Don't you wish you could experience this all the time?" I didn't know anything about the inner world or overshadowers, but it was clearly creepy and, frankly, the reason I never did it or any other psychedelic ever again.

I'm talking about this here because at some point during my time with the Brothers, they pointed out that any experience you might have with drugs, you can achieve through meditation (this, long before the *jhansi* movement). That's all they said, but as I became more knowledgeable about Eastern metaphysics, what was happening with drugs became more obvious.

Part of what drugs do is to give the experiencer a glimpse into the inner worlds. Sometimes the thought-forms one links into seem quite blissful, sometimes not so much (a "bad trip" can happen when the tripper gets drawn into the lower astral where all the heavy, gross thought-forms live). The point is, using drugs to enter the inner worlds, even if the trip seems enlightening, is kind of a hollow victory in that you need the drug to enter the state. The experience isn't really *yours*. If you do the work and achieve the accomplishment through deep meditation, your ability to enter isn't predicated on taking a drug. You can "go there" whenever you choose.

Of course, meditating into bliss states is not something you will find chelas doing as a rule. They are afforded periods of rest and recuperation, but in general it is a self-involved act and really leads nowhere in a spiritual sense. Still, I thought the dichotomy between drugs and meditation was interesting.

As a side note, the Buddha's *Eight-Fold Path* was designed to give the seeker a pathway to enlightenment. Its eighth limb was Concentration, and in that He talked about right-meditation, called *jhana*. Modern-day folk have taken that idea and expanded it in an attempt to meditate into bliss states. Not exactly a pristine use of the idea, but that's what's happening.

Chapter 25

Musings 11
That Bugaboo of Bugaboos, Sex

[If, at any point in your life, you choose to follow a dedicated, solitary spiritual path, especially if you have first spent time living *in the world* (versus having become a monk at the age of seven), one of the things you will undoubtedly have to contend with will be the sexual energies.[1] Your success or failure in negotiating these immense thought-forms will be predicated on all sorts of things: the thought-forms you've attached yourself to before taking up *the path* (look at much porn? . . . you could have a problem with that); your ability to step away from addictions that lead to short-lived pleasure; your insecurities; your ability to empathize into another's situation; your need to have appreciative attention directed at you; any karmic knots you may have to deal with. There is a lot, in other words, going on when it comes to the sexual energies. This chapter is an attempt to look at the bugaboos (and if I hit a nerve or you don't agree with something I say, keep reading. Things will hopefully come together sooner or later.)]

Want to talk about massive, convoluted, powerful thought-forms? Consider what all goes into the wad of thought-energy

[1] Huge note right off the bat: It is not required that the following of a spiritual path be solitary. In fact, the Brothers said that there are two general paths, the path of the ascetic (the solitary path) and the path of the householder. People who follow the path of the householder marry and raise children. When the children are grown, having done their duty, the husband and wife are free to split up to follow their own spiritual paths (should they choose to do so). This is called "following one's dharma." The path of the householder is very much an honorable path to take. The Brothers said it is the more difficult of the two paths to tread. I'm talking about the solitary path because it is, more or less, the path I have found myself on, and because my experience has been that spiritual leaps don't happen in conjunction with another individual, they happen inside myself alone. Having said all that, I would expect that understanding what-all rides on the sexual energies would be useful to aspirants on both paths.

that rides on what you and I call *sex*.

The first year I was with the Brothers, I asked them how I might deal with my own over-active, cantankerous sex drive. They had the wisdom to know (surprise, surprise) that it wasn't right for them to tell me what I might see should I take the time and effort to look for myself. Their pontificating about sex in the abstract wasn't going to help. I needed to experience life as it came to me. So when I asked, their enigmatic reply was that there would come a time when the desires would dampen and, if I chose to, I could walk away from them then.

I wasn't going to complain, but in my ignorance I remember thinking it seemed like kind of a weak response. I understand better now.

This leaves me in an interesting predicament. When all is said and done, *you* have to figure out what is driving you with regard to sex. Nobody can do it for you. I'm certainly no Master. If I were, I'd follow the model they animated with me and keep my mouth shut letting you figure it out from scratch on your own. Fortunately (or unfortunately as the case may be), I'm writing this autobiography specifically because the contact I had with the Brothers has allowed me to see life from a little different perspective than the norm.[2] So what should I do here, open my big mouth or keep it shut?

Damn! The open mouth gets the nod . . . sort of. I still can't tell you how to deal with your sex drive. What I can do is attempt to tease out the streams of thought that flow around and through the idea of sex.[3] None of this was obvious to me when I started out.

To begin with, a person's take on sex depends upon what part of the thought-stream associated with sex they identify with within their own thinking. If, for instance, you are a homebody and have someone you love in your life, you probably won't be particularly interested in Internet porn (this, assuming you didn't become addicted to it before finding your love and/or aren't so familiar with your partner that nothing he or she does ex-

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[2] And for the record, I'm perfectly aware that my experiences along the lines of sex in this life probably haven't been much different than anyone else's. I'm also aware that a lot of very bright people have thought long and hard about this subject, and that what they've had to say may be more profound than anything I might offer. With that acknowledgement and admission, though, I still feel it's more or less my responsibility to give the topic a try as I do have a somewhat unique perspective. That's what I'm doing.

[3] If you will remember, I said that at one point in my spiritual evolution I had the experience of being able to see very clearly the motives that resided underneath the apparent motives I had for everything I did. What I'm going to try to do here is a similar kind of thing.

cites you any more). On the other hand, if you are alone and have no one in your life, sex for you may well be more about *getting off* than *making love to someone you adore*. The point is, in the next few pages I may very well make mention of aspects of the sexual energies that you feel no connection to at all. Nevertheless, if you want to understand what *could* ride underneath the surface, you have to look at it all.

Before I start, though, I should mention two other small points.

First, *I'm talking here from a male, heterosexual perspective*. I have had a few insights into the tone of the sexually driven thought-forms that females deal with, but I'm generally as clueless about women as the next guy. That's not to say that next time around I may not come back in a female body and all the mystery will evaporate. For now, though, my primary experiences have been with the thought-forms that swirl around heterosexual males. Second, what I'm about to write is aimed primarily at people who are intent on moving along a relatively one-pointed spiritual path, whether they have spent time *in the world* or not.

If points *one* and *two* don't mesh with you (which is to say, if you are female or gay, or if you are reading this for the amusement of it and nothing else), you should still find what I have to say interesting (so hopefully you'll continue to read along . . .). In any case, for someone moving on a spiritual path, what would I want them to know? I'll start with the things that are easily itemized.

*****One of the more important things to realize is that the sex-act has one primary reason for being. It is the mechanism by which nature allows Beings to produce bodies through which other Beings can come into experience on this physical level. That is what it was originally designed to do.[4] The act *is* pleasurable (hence our desire to do it over and over again). Nature would have been crazy *not* to have made it so. And yes, it has morphed into a way of bonding and showing affection, but it isn't a toy. Treating it that way will run you into all sorts of problems down the line.

*****Having made the previous point, living in today's world and flowing along with the rest of humanity means you are probably going to have a whole lot more opportunity to have sex than would be the case if you were just treating it as nothing more than a procreation device. If, at some point, you go *the worldly route*, and there's nothing wrong with doing that,

[4] Remember the chelas who married, had sex once to create a body for a high chela who had to come in, then lived as brother and sister for the rest of their lives. Their use of sex was, by definition, about as pure as it gets.

know that there are a good half-dozen reasons why you might be drawn toward sexual activity with none of them being nasty, unnatural or unreasonable. Sex isn't inherently bad no matter what the church says about it.[5]

✱You have to remember that you are sporting an animal body that is GENETICALLY DESIGNED to procreate. Within the pantheon of thought-forms that stream through you daily, the primal, animal urge to mate is natural and, if you haven't already noticed, very powerful.

✱You have to be aware that there will exist certain physical and emotional patterns that may be animated by others with which your animal complex will resonate. (Translation: You will run into people whose look or smell or bearing will *turn you on*.)

✱You cannot be surprised if you encounter human beings who dearly *want* to be sexually attractive, and who will carry a tone about themselves that will be demonstrably sexual in nature.

✱It's important to note how *social* human beings are. Having a *significant other* is, if not the norm, at the very least the desired norm within society. Go to any resort and you will find couples, two by two by two, everywhere. An unattached male or female in many settings just doesn't fit in. This can be a big deal for the personal side of the child-self.

✱Given the thought-forms that permeate today's world, you need to know that if you are going to flow with the stream of humanity (which is to say, if you intend to have one foot on a spiritual path and the other *in the world*), there is nothing wrong with wanting to *become one through sex* with someone you love. This is particularly powerful if that someone is a full-blown soulmate, but it's also true if the individual is someone for whom you are simply well tuned.

✱You should not be *surprised* to find yourself wanting to *become one through sex* with someone *even if you are not in love with the individual*. The mere act is exciting to the personal-self.

✱You need to be aware that your brain can quite easily generate *from absolutely nothing* fantasies designed to satisfying the lesser sides of the child's perceived wants and needs.[6]

✱It will help if you understand that karma's intent is to make you

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[5] OK, this is probably a cheap shot at the church. I have to say, though, when I was growing up I ran into a lot of good Christians who were very conflicted about their sexual proclivities and the Church's pronouncements about sex and sin.

[6] It hasn't happened often, but there have been times when that dumb, small self of mine has taken an innocent kindness from a pretty female and mentally turned it into a *she really wants me* kind of thing (even if the insanity has lasted for only a few moments) . . . embarrassing, very embarrassing.

grow. Collectively, the sexual energies are a powerful tool for drawing you into interaction with other human beings. Being drawn into this kind of experience MAY be important for your personal growth and understanding or, in some cases, may be important for your spiritual health. My experience with Mary is a prime example of the latter of these scenarios.

*****You will notice that you are constantly being bombarded with sexual imagery. It is everywhere: on TV, on the Internet, in music, in the movies, in advertisements, everywhere.

*****It doesn't hurt to come to grips with the fact that if you are male, there will come a time when you will incarnate as a female . . . and vice versa. In a cosmic sense, your gender is not really who you are and it is not set in stone.[7]

*****You will come to see that the thought-forms around the sexual response are not the least bit trivial in their complexity. When trying to understand your urge to act sexually, there is probably a whole lot going on under the surface that is not at all evident (this being true both when you are acting with a partner and when you are going solo).

*****If you have had much of a sex life and you decide to step away from the experience, do not be surprised if your child-self fights you tooth and nail.

*****Do not be surprised to find that your child-self very much craves being the center of another human Being's attention.

*****At this point in human evolution, there are very few people who treat sex as it was originally intended. And although many people do it to be close to the person they love, there are lots and lots of people who animate the thought-forms around sex simply because they enjoy the sensations and mental jousting that comes with the experience, and they just want to *feel the feeling*. As such, the act is suffused with a long list of thought-forms that are not necessarily supportive of that primary role but that are regularly invoked by us humans. Some of these thought-forms come with a very dark side to them. At some point, you will need to look at these.

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[As I'm pretty sure I mentioned earlier, there was a period at the beginning of my time with the Brothers when I watched very closely what was hap-

[7] I wrote this long before the category of "gender nonconforming" came into modern-day lexicon.

pening in my brain when I was thinking. You'd expect an exercise like that would happen in a sit-down meditation, but one of my more interesting enlightenments came as I was driving down the freeway.

I was in the middle of a *walking meditation* in which I was actively watching my brain think (as I said) when came an *ahha* moment. For those of you who know, these come in a flash and kind of resemble the flipping of a switch. One minute I was observing normal thoughts, the next I was seeing in detail the stream of mini-thoughts that run underneath the surface. The *big, clunky, outer-thoughts* my conscious self deals with in everyday life were just that, big and clunky. What became clear in that moment was that *a thought is not a singular thing*, it is really supported by an understructure that resembles *filaments of thoughts and motives* from a myriad of sources.

What I'm about to talk about are the filaments I think are associated with sex.]

With the observation I made in the paragraph above, it's time to do a little teasing. (All of the underlying streams I'm about to list have to do with ways normal people *might* use sex in an everyday setting, not how a chela would approach sex.)[8]

Stream #1: There is the relatively pure, "I just want to make sweet love to my wife or significant other" stream. This is the ideal. When a father looks at his daughter's husband or boyfriend, this is the thought-energy he prays will ride on their lovemaking. It is, I think, what most men want when they start out, assuming they haven't been introduced to pornography at an early age. And I suspect that this is what most women hope for from a man, at least when they start out in life. (I might add, if this is where you are as a man, you are a lucky fellow and the rest of this is probably going to sound like the stuff of *pervs*. Don't be misled. Beneath motives there are motives. Seeing it all is important, especially if you really want to understand what is going on with the sexual energies.)

Stream #2: Stream two has to do with violence. Having sex is not an inherently docile activity. During it, assuming we are talking about what society would characterize as "normal" sex, a man essentially places a woman in a defenseless position on her back with her legs spread and pro-

[8] I should mention that this was written in the early 2000's.

ceeds to drive his erect penis into her (even if he's "gentle" about it, it's an invasion). He then proceeds to go banging away at her until his excitement reaches a climax and he ejaculates.[9]

Although I don't think most guys consciously register the fact, THIS IS NOT A PEACEFUL ACT. It may be something women enjoy and look forward to experiencing, but it has within its very nature an element of violence.

Stream #3: (It's 2020, and a lot has happened in the last few years around dating and guy/girl interactions in general. As such, this stream may seem a bit 1950's, which is to say, outdated. I'm keeping it in because it is a strain of thought-forms that exist, and although it may not be manifesting itself outright right now, its presence is important).

For some guys, sex with a significant other is a territorial thing. Even though there may be all sorts of very strict boundaries set up by the woman, *and even though this may not be the way she is looking at things*, the having of sex comes across to some men as a woman saying through her actions *I'm yours, do with me what you will*. It is why, in the beginning, the act used to be referred to as *a conquest*. It is why the act used to be referred to as *taking her*. It is why make-up sex is often so good—the guy is reclaiming "his rights" after temporarily losing them.[10] This is also partially why a woman who is *submissive* is so attractive to some men.[11]

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9 Again, I'm focusing here on heterosexual sex as that is what I'm close to and familiar with. If that is not you, the underlying principles are more or less the same so you'll just have to extrapolate with my apologies for my inadequacy. Also, I'm well aware that there are positions other than *missionary*. It's the principle that is important here.

10 Interesting, the first thing Mary said when she slid into bed with me on that prank night was, "You realize you have no rights here?" I, of course, said, "Certainly!"

11 This is also related to one of the two or three reasons why some men lose interest in sex with their partner with time. In the beginning of a relationship, presumably in an attempt to be found desirable, wives and girlfriends are often relatively compliant and adventuresome when it comes to sex. As they become more and more comfortable with their relationship, they tend to put more and more restrictions on what the guy is allowed to do, and when he is allowed to do it. It is not uncommon for this to escalate to a point where the man no longer feels like the aggressor but, rather, like a poor relation asking for a handout. Even more interesting: the new policies on college campuses now require women to give CONSTANT CONSENT before and while having sex (this is to combat the purportedly widespread incidence of rape on campus, which I'm all for . . . the combatting, not the rape). It will be interesting to see how this affects males, though, and their exercising of the sexual energies. It may make them more thoughtful, moving them away from the thought-form of aggression . . . or it may just drive the desire underground via porn. I guess we will see. (As a minor side point, the other two fairly primary reasons people slow down on the sex

Stream #4: Stream four has to do with the desire to dominate or have power over another human being. Creating a situation in which there exists the illusion that a woman has no choice but to take the invasion whether she likes it or not is a very powerful thought-form around having sex. Holding the woman's hands over her head (or tying them up) so she is completely defenseless can be very exciting. Even if the woman is happy to comply, the *thinking* behind the action, taken to extremes, closely parallels some of the aspects involved in what we call rape.[12] As irritating as this might be for many women, domination of another human being is a provocative and arousing thought-form for many men.[13]

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side of relationship, as best I can see, is that (1) sex was never meant in a cosmic sense to be a carnival act, so as soon as the novelty wears off and the child-self loses its fascination with its exploration of the object of its affection, sex just kind of naturally loses it glamour, and (2) I believe there is biology involved that moves people to procreate, then moves them to *stop* procreating so as to be able to take care of the offspring created by that procreation. Even if children aren't generated, I think this kind of neurochemical wash happens in the brain with time.)

[12] I realize that classic rape is technically one individual taking another individual without his or her consent. It also, often, involves physical violence and almost always involves enormous psychological trauma to the individual being attacked (especially if the experience is "brutal"). As such, these two scenarios are obviously *not the same*. They are similar, though, in the sense that in both cases (at least if we are talking about guys on girls), *in the man's mind* the woman is being made (as I said above) to take it whether she likes it or not. (I might add, I don't believe most guys are *consciously* thinking about this as they hold their partner's hands over her head—the thought just kind of rides along unobserved underneath the surface with the action. It's a really good example of how the child-self entertains thoughtforms that really aren't OK, but does so in a way that makes those thought-forms opaque even to itself. That is why introspection is so important. It is with introspection that these tendencies are brought to light.)

[13] A splendid example of this popped its ugly head up several years after I started with the Brothers. I was watching television one night and stumbled across an old Peter Falk movie. The premise was that Falk was the manager of an all-girl wrestling tag-team. His girls, of course, were pretty and very well built, and the story line led up to their big match against the "bad girl" tag team.

It was all very dumb, but in the middle of it, something happened that got my attention. During one of the matches, one of Falk's girls was getting badly beaten—everything from awesome throws to illegal punches to windmill spins. She was getting totally dominated and, to my surprise, I was getting totally aroused.

I was horrified. Here I was, watching this girl getting the shit kicked out of her, and I was getting excited. What was going on?

Although I know lots of people have noted this before me, and although I probably look really naïve for pointing out my complete astonishment at this, this was my first hint that there was a connection between violence, domination and the sexual response in males.

(BIG NOTE: If you are a woman and are reading this, don't be horrified. I'm talking about the thought-forms that often ride *underneath the surface* of men's thinking when they are having sex. That is, most of this is very subtle and not at all a conscious part of a male's thinking. As most women suspect, few guys are big on analyzing their motives and feelings. For the majority, the act of sex is fairly mindless and primal.)

We've identified the four streams that I think are most prevalent underneath men's thinking when it comes to sex (remember, if you are a guy, you may be animating only one or two of these to the exclusion of the others, depending upon where you are as a human being, what you have been exposed to in your life and what kind of a relationship you are or aren't currently in). I'm not altogether sure I haven't missed some, but I think the ones I've listed are solid.[14]

So, a man and woman have sex. If the couple is lucky enough to be happily married and love one another, or even if they are not married but still love one another, sex can be a wonderful experience. The two meld together with their auras actually becoming one for a short period of time, there is a kind of ringing that goes up into the inner worlds that alerts Beings there that there might be a physical body about to be formed, and the whole affair is stimulating and blissfully rapturous.

There is a large population of men in the world who experience sex this way and who are perfectly happy doing so.

There is an equally large population of men, though, who are disenfranchised from that particular set of emotions because they either don't have someone who loves them or because they do have someone who loves them but they've lost their zest for sex due to familiarity (e.g., having sex with the same woman for twenty years has the potential of becoming a bit . . . well, predictable . . . and I suspect that a woman in that situation might feel the same about her man).

If the guy is normal, being in this situation doesn't lessen his desire to feel the sensations of being sexually active, even if the only way he can get excited is by animating the darker side of the thought-forms associated with sex (and even if his only avenue is to *think* the streams into existence because he has to go solo). The mental thrill of putting a woman in that

[14] It's 2018 and the #MeToo movement has sprung up with gusto. It will be interesting to see how its impetus affects the thinking of males going through puberty over the next few years.

"defenseless position" (i.e., the animation of the thought-forms associated with exercising domination over another) or the excitement that comes with "the invasion" (i.e., the violence), these may be the props they use to become excited because they may be the only props that seem available to them.

In short, it is quite possible, probably even, for a basically normal, decent guy to become addicted to the sexual tension that comes from exercising the thought-forms around sex that aren't particularly wholesome.

And where does that leave us?

If a guy wants to *get off* but, for whatever reason, the path to sexual arousal and climax does not go through the thought-forms associated with "coupling lovingly with your mate-for-life," he is probably going to make things happen by linking himself to thought-forms of sexual violence and/or domination.[15] Again, he may not consciously realize he is doing this, but that is the path he is likely to take if his goal is to *feel the feeling*.

The upside of this, if there be one, is that he can do all this fantasizing in the privacy of his own minds. One doesn't need to *be* violent with a lover, all one has to do is *think* about being violent. In fact, nobody knows what their partner is thinking while having sex, hence the joke about the wife who asks her husband, "Who were *you* with last night?" when physically she knows it was herself.

Side Note: For guys in this day and age, a natural resource for this kind of experience (especially if we are talking about a solo act) is the Internet (as I said in the footnote). I know many women are generally derisive of this, chiding guys for their interest in "that pornography thing."

The problem here is that many woman get sexually excited more by *situations* than by seeing something sexy (though seeing does apparently have its effect). Until recently, I had no way to confirm that observation one way or the other. Lately, I've had a curious breakthrough.

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[15] Because guys are so visual in their arousal patterns, the Internet has spawned a massive number of both conventional and "kinky" porn sites. When I first began to look into the world of sex through the Web, I called my Internet provider, Earthlink, and asked one of their managers if it was illegal to look at and/or download pornography in California. The guy hedged mightily saying that I would have to talk to a lawyer. Finally, though, after I told him I was doing research for something I wanted to write—the very something you are currently reading—he finally said that if the law wanted to arrest everyone who visited porn sites in a given evening, they'd have to raid every fourth house in the city. My reaction was, "You've got to be kidding." According to the guy, there is an ENORMOUS nightly trafficking in pornography on the Web, and this was way back in the early 2000's.

I had a girlfriend recently who, when she got nervous, could invoke an orgasm due to situational pressure. As amazing as I found this to be, she could be sitting in a car about to go into a store to buy something she really couldn't afford, and simply by lightly touching herself a few times down south could invoke an orgasm. I was never around to witness this feat, but it was something that was apparently related to being stressed, and according to her it was something she could do.

Guys aren't that way. Sure, a guy might enjoy a candle lit dinner, but by and large men need a grosser level of stimulation to get them going. That is why they are excited by the shape of a breast, a nice derriere, or by the kind of visual fantasies they can experience through "adult entertainment." It is *visual* stimulation that does the job for them.

Many women look at guys who go to porn sites and can't understand what the attraction is. The word *perv* is often bandied about. The problem, at least for a lot of regular, everyday guys, is that they want to experience the almighty orgasm but can't have one sitting in a car worrying about where they are going to get the money for the buy they are about to make. Men simply think differently.[16]

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[I've thought long and hard about whether I should include this next section because it animates a topic that isn't very pleasant and, frankly, was something I had trouble moving my mind around. I'm doing it because it is giving me a chance to show one more example of how I've come to view the world, how I think the world works underneath the surface and because it has the potential of being educational. Don't knee-jerk on this and don't jump to conclusions. I'm not presenting it for the reasons you may think halfway through. Look for *the why* of the presentation at the end.]

We need to think a little bit about humankind's ability to think creatively and child-self's tendency to landscape its thinking by compartmentalization.

Not uncommon to most decent guys, I have always had a major problem with rape. When I was a kid, just thinking about some guy taking a woman against her will was like mentally scratching my fingernails across

[16] And no, I am not suggesting that all women are similarly "fine-tuned." Most are apparently not as visually driven as men, though, with the visual appeal being part of what makes porn so attractive to men.

a chalkboard. This feeling was magnified years later when a girlfriend of mine in college was nearly raped. I had the opportunity at that time to see first-hand how emotionally devastating something like that can be for a woman.

In short, due to my general tendencies and experiences in life, I have rather naturally viewed the act of *forced sex* (i.e., rape) from the perspective of the victim, and I have found it abhorrent.

Having said all that, years and years ago I saw a prime-time TV movie in which a couple of male bank robbers got caught in the bank they were robbing and had to take hostages. During the siege, they realized they weren't going to make it out in one piece and decided they might as well have their way with the pretty teller who was in their clutches.

I don't know if the director was trying to inject a dash of realism into his work or whether he was simply attempting to make the movie edgy by appealing to his male audience's baser nature, but in any case he had the good grace to have their advances fail. What he did show before the failure, though, was one of the robbers talking threateningly to the woman as he ran a knife blade down the woman's neck heading toward her breasts. The intention was clear. The robber was saying through his actions, "We are going to do what we are going to do, and you can't stop us!"

One of the things I hadn't yet noticed in my life (but was about to notice) was that when I watch TV and movies, I suspend my tendency to watch myself think. Instead, I flow along with the action more or less mindlessly. That, I suspect, is part of the appeal of TV and movies. You can give your brain a rest and let an outside source move you.

I mention this because as I sat there engulfed in this drama, I realized that I wasn't particularly horrified by the suggestion that the men might do something inappropriate to the woman. In fact, I found myself getting kind of excited. As soon as I realized what was happening my mind snapped to and my brains said loud and clear, "WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON, HERE?" (And yes, I seem to think that a lot while watching TV.)

Meditating on this later, the first thing I noticed was that by the very act of watching the movie, I had (as mentioned above) unconsciously allowed myself to flow into the thought-forms that were riding through the movie. The action wasn't contrived to animate the horror the teller might be experiencing as the men moved toward accomplishing their intended act. The movie was written to draw you into the thinking of the men.

Second, I realized that as I sat watching, a part of me had uncon-

sciously compartmentalized what I was seeing. I was watching a movie, not witnessing a real occurrence. Movies are fake. (People who get shot in movies don't really die, they just appear to die.) My following along with the fantasy wasn't bad or wrong, it was just me going along with the fantasy being presented. That was how my brain was rationalizing what I was seeing.

None of what I've just outlined was a conscious part of my thinking at the time of the movie, but in looking back I realized that it was there nevertheless. At the time, I wasn't being a pervert. I was just going where the thought-forms were taking me. That is the way I felt as it was happening. It wasn't until my brain snapped to attention that I realized that where I had been led had the potential of being quite unsavory.

Where does this leave us?

Rape in the raw is certainly not something a decent guy would ever want to engage in, and it is certainly not something he would ever condone. It is also something he would never want to have happen to his daughter or wife or mother or sister or, pretty much, any woman on the planet. Yet when basically decent men see video depictions of this act, a fair number of them become aroused with no idea why such a despicable act should cause them such an embarrassing reaction.

What's going on?

Ignoring the oft-quoted woman's assertion that *men are just pigs*, what men are doing in cases like this is NOT flowing along with the thought-forms associated with the woman—not empathizing with the victim. For whatever reason, they are looking at the act through the eyes of the assailant.

Additionally, they are compartmentalizing. In the world of porn, a watcher can take the awfulness of seeing a rape by landscaping it as a scenario in which what is being seen is not an ugly, psychologically damaging event but rather a hot girl pretending she's upset about getting dominated. It isn't *really* rape, it's just a guy and his girlfriend having rough sex. She's being coy; he's being forceful. He's pretending to be violent; she's pretending to be submissive. There is no truly unwanted sex happening here. No sir!

For a lot of guys, that is how the brain frames what porn sites called *forced sex fantasies*, and it all has to do with the mind's ability to compartmentalize while creating a fantasy scenario that circumvents the ickiness of the reality of a situation. And in doing so, at least some guys find a sex

act that excites them.

There are ten thousand reasons why this is not something guys should be doing. This is also not me excusing that kind of behavior. Put a little differently, would it be good if guys would stop watching *forced sex fantasy porn* and take rape for the horror that it is? Surely yes! *But all that kind of misses the point I'm trying to make about the child-self here*.

The brain can and does create self-illusions. Is it good that the brain can do this? It's neither good nor bad, it just is. It all has to do with our mandate as human Beings—to learn to deal with the mental creativity that exists within us as a consequence of our being a part of the Divine Mind. That we may use it poorly is not a sin, but it is something for which we will sooner or later have to take responsibility.[17]

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[17] A few thoughts about the way I went about tackling this topic (I'm including this because I really like the preamble): Ramakrishna was a saint and mystic who lived in India in the mid-1800's. He grew up poor but had from early childhood mystical experiences and a strong devotion to the mother figure (Kali in the Hindu pantheon). He had very little formal education, but according to Kay he could talk knowledgeably to scholars about just about anything as he had apparently opened up the kundalini (this is a divine fire that resides dormant at the base of the spine in all humans), had drawn it up the spine into the third eye (the energy-center in the forehead associated with wisdom) and as a consequence, had access to knowledge with a capital K (I don't know how this works, but I suspect it has something to do with making a *connection with* and *tapping into* the *halls of learning* in the inner worlds). Aside from being remarkable in this way, he was a very benevolent man who brought grassroots social services to the people of Calcutta when India as a nation provided no social services at all to its population (when I visited Calcutta, two-thirds of the population slept on the streets every night—with that kind of destitution, this is where Mother Teresa set up her clinic in the mid-1900's).

I don't remember where I heard (or read) this, but there is a story about him becoming uncharacteristically angry at one of his disciples when the disciple wanted to try a meditation that was/is designed to take one into some of the bliss-states that exist in the inner worlds. Ramakrishna's reaction was predicated on his own experience. He, himself, had done this meditation for six months (uninterrupted). He said of the experience that it was, indeed, blissful, but that it was so much so that he was very nearly unable to make himself leave it. Chasing bliss was not only not something he wanted for his disciple, it wasn't something he thought his disciple could handle.

Why am I talking about this? I would never sexually assault a woman, but I did spend time looking at pornography that depicted that kind of activity because I knew I would be writing what you are reading now, and I knew I had no clue as to why someone would carry out such an act. I got it into my head that the only way I could really understand what was going on with rape was to flow into the thought-forms that are associated with such an act. My rational was that if a chela can let experience flow through the self without being affected by it, why couldn't I (this, I might add, was a spectacularly stupid line of reasoning, given the fact that the training provided to chelas is lightyears beyond the teeny weeny bit of training I had received, but that bit of obviousness apparently alluded me at the time).

So stepping back from the topic and speaking generally to anyone who wants to follow a spiritual path, where does this lead?

Don't be hateful toward those who are failing (and I'm not just talking about individuals who are addicted to extreme pornography). Instead, work to understand *why* they are failing. Training yourself to see beyond the *knee-jerk obvious* will help you to both understand and deal with times when *you* go off the rails, and that is a very useful commodity to have.[18]

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[Bottom line?]

What's the bottom line of our overall discussion?

You are where you are when it comes to sex. Nobody can tell you what to think or how to react to the situations you find yourself in. The one characteristic that does exist in every individual who travels a spiritual path, though, is the ability to look beyond the superficial motives the child-self presents to the self to see what underlies the urges that are pushing it

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The point is, I wanted to better understand what was going on in the mind of a Being who might do something like that, and watching pornography that animated that kind of behavior allowed my mind to flow into that kind of thought-stream.

I have to say that it worked, but it was icky beyond belief, animated aspects of humankind (of which I obviously count myself one) that I would really prefer not to exist, and with each viewing leadened the tone around me leaving a sickly heaviness that was most uncomfortable and hard to shake. I was as disciplined as I could be during all of this, and I definitely learned what I wanted to learn, but I came away realizing that doing something like this is really not the way to go and, more to the point, is not worth the spiritual dislocation it caused (although I didn't make the connection at the time, the Brothers called putting one's self into a situation like this *the yoga of desperation*). It was kind of like going into a sewer and rolling around in what was there.

So my point? Just as Ramakrishna steered his follower away from that meditation designed to take him into bliss states, I can tell you that trying something like what I did with the porn IS A REALLY BAD IDEA (the link between the two scenarios being that both are based on messing around with thought-forms in the inner world). I was, in fact, a damn fool for having tried it. The activity was nasty, had a seriously addictive tint to it and, if you start, has a high likelihood you won't be able to stop. I was fortunate. I got what I wanted and was able to step away . . . but karma didn't make it easy . . .

[18] Not that getting Biblical is going to help, but from the *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 7.5), "Hypocrite, first cast out the beam in thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the speck out of thy brother's eye." Also, don't conclude from any of this that you shouldn't help out a friend who has a porn problem. I'm talking about how an individual on a spiritual path might approach their own life . . .

forward. That insight into the self is vitally important.

In other words, as was written over the entrance to the Temple of Apollo at Delphi in Greece, a site of one of the ancient Mystery School (and a place of the Brothers), *KNOW THYSELF*. That is something you need to work on long and hard.

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[Oopsie: It's 2016 and I'm inserting this section because something has happened over the last five or ten years that is interesting and seems like something about which I should speak. It has more to do with pornography and the Internet.]

I read an interesting article in *Time* magazine several months ago written about young men in their twenties who were actively speaking out against Internet pornography. They weren't doing so for moralistic reasons. They were doing it because, according to them, they had been watching Internet provided porn since they were quite young and the consequence was that they had gotten to the point where having contact with real, live, sexually willing females did absolutely nothing for them (even though they wanted it to). This obviously distressing situation is apparently widespread, and somehow a bunch of these guys got together and decided to try to spread the word about the danger.

Their success in diverting young males away from a similar fate is not the point of order here. After all, when you are young with acne all over your face and you have no "willing female" in your life but your hormones are saying "horny, horny, horny," the chances that you are going to look to the future and abstain from Internet porn thinking, "No, no, I'm not going to look at that ravishingly beautiful, nubile female that is doing all those interestingly athletic things with that guy (who I'm not really even seeing) cause sometime in the next ten years I *might* run into a girl I really like who wants to have sex with me and I might not be able to *get it up* because of what I'm doing right now . . . so I'll just abstain" . . . the chances that their level of sophistication and insight will be great enough to encompass all that are not very good. (Minor note: Don't get me wrong, if someone *could* pull that off—and not being introduced to porn at a young age would surely help—I say *hooray*, but that's not why I'm talking about this here.)

What is interesting about this for me is what is happening underneath the surface. When a guy watches porn, he is taking in visual content but

he is also actively creating in his mind a scenario to go along with the visuals—a scenario that he finds stimulating. This may mean that he just flows along with the action as it is represented on the screen, but as time proceeds and he see more and more porn, his mind (I think) will get bored with the same-old same-old, and it will begin to riff on its own.

As it does this, it will begin to generate scenarios that are exactly fitted to his particular interests and curiosities, *which will escalate*, producing exactly what he needs to get excited. This, of course, is all connected to thought-forms in the inner worlds, so where all this leads is anyone's guess. The point is that there is an enormous amount of control on the part of the guy as to what he is mentally experiencing.

The problem? That kind of mental engagement isn't present when the guy is with a real, live girl. In that case, there are an entirely different set of thought-forms being activated. So if the body has been trained to erupt sexually with thought-forms of the former type—thought-forms that are *not* present with the presence of a living girl—it shouldn't be surprising to find that, sadly, nothing happens when it's "just her."

This is a relatively common, relatively pervasive problem in this day and age, and it is all based on how thought-forms affect and infect our existence.

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[and a Post Script concerning me and my "research" . . .]

It's 2018 and Kay died twenty years ago. The first time I looked at a pornographic web site was about seventeen or eighteen years ago (not the extreme stuff I talked about in the footnote, just run-of-the-mill porn). As I mentioned earlier, it gave me an icky, unclean feeling (not as icky as the force-sex stuff, but icky nevertheless). It additionally had a side to it that was, once you were *into* it, exciting with an addictive edge. It took quite a while to figure out what was going on in my head when it came to the sexual response. By the time I did, you'd expect I'd put the practice aside and move on. In fact, I did . . . almost. I say this because as time proceeded, I got to a place where occasionally, when I was feeling particularly bored, I would go back to the diversion as "something to do." It wasn't until I realized, maybe ten years ago, that I was visualizing actions that a chela would never animate, that I stopped.[19]

[19] Specifically, a chela would never animate a mindset that was predicated on having pow-

How I did this is interesting. I remember one of the Brothers talking about what it was like when enlightenment came and it was time to definitively deal with a child-self that down-deep, really didn't want to leave being his child-self. I don't remember who was talking, but what he said was that when the time came for him to make the move, he simply acknowledged the presence of the child, told it that it was good and useful, then once it was feeling comfortable and secure just walked away from it quietly.

Stepping away from pornography was a lot like that. A *power-move* wouldn't have done it. Trying to yank myself into submission would only have heightened my child-self's defense-response and the desire to experience the mental stimulation and sensation would only have magnified. What was needed was the quiet walking away. It was not an easy thing to do, but that was what I more or less did . . . sort of.[20]

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er over another human being, and that is what underlies at least some of the thought-forms that swirl around "having sex." If I wanted to *live the life*, I needed to step away from that urge entirely. This brought another interesting observation.

There is a common rationalization that men often utilize in their attempt NOT to feel quite so perv-like about both their looking at pornography and their engaging in the fantasies that accompany pornography. It is the belief that, in reality, the women involved actually enjoy whatever it is they are doing (or are being subjected to). What is being missed in that thinking is that even if that was the case, someone on a true spiritual path would never WANT those women to buy into those thought-forms. This doesn't ignore the fact that sex for women can be complicated, it just curbs men using those complications as an excuse for unsavory behavior. A compassionate man, a truly compassionate man, would want what is best in a spiritual sense for the women he has contact with, and that doesn't include wishing upon them thought-forms that are degrading and destructive in a spiritual sense.

[20] I think I mentioned this earlier, but the Brothers told us that St Paul spent several days holed up in a cave trying to vanquish his sex drive. All he managed to do was to animate the thought-forms associated with sex, making them bigger and more energized than they normally would have been, and he vanquished nothing. Fighting with thought-forms you wish to extricate yourself from is not the way to go.

As an aside, when I first wrote this chapter I tried to present the idea of *walking away from the sexual energies* in a novel way. I'm including what I wrote below because it's fun.

The *Mahabharata* is an epic poem from India originally written in Sanskrit. It is ten times longer than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* combined. When Kay was in India, she happened upon a continuous, outdoor dramatization of the poem that span *whole days*.

Within the *Mahabharata* resides a story called "The Bhagavad Gita." The *Gita* appears on the surface to be a dialogue between Prince Arjuna and his charioteer, the god Krishna. The Brothers told us (this being common knowledge, apparently), that what was really going on underneath the surface was a commentary about the wars that rage within the self as one attempts to tread a spiritual path (which is to say, the war between the Higher Mind—that piece of God within all of us, identified as *Brahman*, and the child-self—the personal, individual-self identified as *the Atman*). The point was that hidden underneath the

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[An extension of the previous footnote.] [21]

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surface of the *Gita* was something more than was superficially evident.

On a little different note, at some point in the Bible (I think it was Matthew 5:38), Christ is purported to have said "resist not evil." He was certainly speaking to the common man (and woman) about the need to not animate revenge when someone does something unkind to you (there is more to the quote that makes this very clear). But much like the *Gita*, I think there was a hidden message underneath the obvious one. I think Christ was giving chelas in the crowd something else to think about. Specifically, I think he was telling them that when you deal with the child-self within, you don't win the day by struggling (as I was tempted to do with my sex drive). Doing that only gives energy and focus to the lesser aspect of the child, the part that wants to hold on to the thought-forms in question. If my suspicion is on target, it give an entirely new meaning to the phrase, "Resist not evil."

[21] This footnote is an extension of the last one. It is also related to the idea of "resisting not evil" (and please don't conclude from it that I'm suggesting you shouldn't stand up for what you think is right).

The Supreme Court (it's December 25, 2023), with its conservative majority, just refused to fast track a decision about Donald Trump's claim to have *executive immunity* from any laws he may have broken (like trying to steal an election or subverting the installation of the rightful winner of the 2020 Presidential race, or instigating an insurrection) while he was the President (if he loses the case this is involved in, he will become ineligible to run for the Presidency in 2024). The rationale for the refusal was that a lower court was hearing the claim and needed to play its proceeding out. The obvious problem with that reasoning is that when Trump loses the case in question, and he will, he is going to appeal it back to the Supreme Court, all of which takes time. This will all happen very close to the next Presidential election, an election in which Trump will most probably be the Republican candidate, and it will give the High Court the opportunity to put the appeal on hold suggesting that it would be better, as so many Republican legislators are now saying, to "let the *voters* decide who should be President" (this making sense assuming we don't have half of the electorate living in a fantasy world generated by years and years of lies, half-truths and propaganda presented to them by Fox News and company). If Trump wins the Presidency, it will be within his power to order the Justice Department to drop all charges against him. In other words, by not taking up the case, the Supreme Court may effectively be giving Trump a pass on prosecution.

When I heard this on the news, I wanted to scream into the set, "YOU MISERABLE ASSHOLES! YOU ARE SHIELDING A CRIMINAL WHO HAS ASPIRATION OF BECOMING A DICTATOR" (Trump made a statement to that effect three weeks earlier). And with that outburst, I would have played directly into the hands of the Dark Side (the more anger and chaos they can generate, the better).

"Resist not evil." What was Christ telling us? He was reminding us that as much as it may be human nature to fight an evil with darkness (like animating out-of-control, emotional anger and rage and becoming unstable, vindictive and possibly vengeful), that only succeeds in making *you* darkness . . . so don't do that!

And what to do in a case like Trump's? Begin by being aware of what is happening. If

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[The point . . .]

The previous section ended with the phrase "sort of." This needs more discussion. I originally tried to do the explaining at the end of this chapter, but after having spent time struggling with it I decided to devote an entire new chapter to the effort. In the meantime, I am going to provide what was to be the end of the "sort of" conversation, the culmination, if you will. That is what follows . . .

Here's the problem. My comparing myself to the Master's "walking away from His child-self" scenario gives the impression that I am some kind of spiritual wunderkind who has the power to vanquish within myself (i.e., walk away from) connections to thought-forms that I have deemed destructive. This is misleading.

I'm a normal human being, just like you. When I put energy into a thought-form by animating it within myself, it is possible to diminish my focus on that thought-form (hence the need to be attentive to the moment so I don't inadvertently get triggered back into the offending energy-form at some time in the future), but my connection to it doesn't cease to exist. All the thoughts I animated while watching porn are still there in my repertoire of emotional responses. When I said I walked away from them, what

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you find parts of what is happening highly disturbing, look inside yourself to see what there is in you that resonates with that thing. Life is a mirror. The child doesn't like to see its hidden foibles. When it does, it reacts with distress (or anger). See what life is mirroring in you.

Once you see clearly what is there (and don't, I might add, take the first thoughts the child-self presents to you—if nothing else, the child is very clever at deflecting scrutiny of itself), decide what you have the power to do. This may be NOTHING, as would be the case with that Supreme Court ruling. If that be the case, don't burn personal energy being outraged (in fact, if you have truly seen what there is to be seen inside your, an angry response should no longer be in evidence). Instead, look to see how you can be of service within your own sphere of influence. The Brothers told Cathy at one point that there would come a time when we would need to look for small pockets of sanity, the implication being that insanity would reign. This may be that time. If it is, tending and supporting those around you may be all you *can* do (remember, karma is working throughout, and where karma needs to go may not align with what you think is right). Evil exists, but if you tussle with it in a classic way (by being angry and wanting to strike out, for instance), your resistance will go nowhere and you will just stoke the Dark Side's fires . . . so *resist not evil* in that way. Don't allow yourself to be manipulated into doing the Dark Side's work for them.

I was really saying was that I had gotten to a point where I could choose not to call them up. If I'm not careful, though, they could reanimate in my thinking at which time I would be right back where I was years ago (this is why I don't watch sexually charged stuff on TV—I don't want to play with the possibility that I might get pulled back in).

In thinking about it (and I find this quite interesting), it dawned on me that this is very similar to the situation recovering addicts find themselves in. They know they will always be an addict, which is to say they will always be attached to the thought-forms they linked into with their addiction. Recovery sees them developing strategies that allow them to *not re-animate those addictions*. That is the key.

In my case, the strategies I formed in attempting to step away from the sexual response were tied to two goals. Remembering Rolf's advice, I didn't want to energize thought-forms I knew I wouldn't want to drag around with me when I crossed over at death. And secondarily, I do have sympathy for women who are more or less forced by society to accept these thought-forms, and I knew that diminishing my attachment to them through *non-use* would pull energy out of them, so that is what I decided to do.

Chapter 26

Musings 12
Consciousness and the Child-Self

[This chapter is new and not something I originally intended to include. At the very end of the *last* chapter I suggested I was following in the footsteps of a Master who, upon enlightenment, had quietly stepped away from His *child-self* (*I* was attempting to step away from the sexual energies). The end of that chapter had me saying that the two situations were similar, . . . sort of. It was the "sort of" that telegraphed the problem.

My read-through had me realizing I needed to say more about Consciousness and the child-self. That turned out to be a lot more complicated than I was expecting. After having added four or five pages of explanation to that last chapter, I decided to give the section its *own* chapter. There is some very esoteric stuff coming. It should be a trip.]

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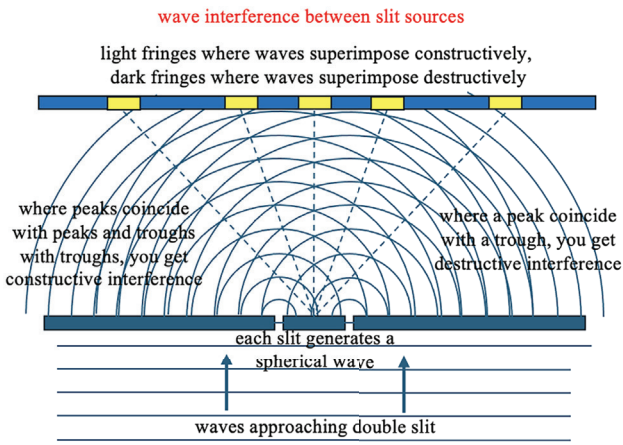
[This is going to seem like kind of an odd way to start a discussion of Consciousness, but it is relevant. It is also fun and educational. Don't get too sidetracked with the bizarreness of it all.]

As an avenue for inquiry, science is a wonderful tool. Still, its public persona can be stunningly shallow. For instance, every year, millions of high school and college students are told that atoms are made up of particles like the proton and electron with little more of importance to know about. Due to shortchangings like this, few people have *any* idea what a remarkable and amazing place the physical world is. To let you see what I'm talking about, let's take a traipse into the understructure of the material world, the world of *the very small*.

If you were to shoot a stream of individual electrons toward a *double thin-slit* set-up, common sense suggests that some of the electrons would go through one slit with the rest going through the other. That means

a fluorescent screen on the other side of the assembly should show two bright fringes where the individual electrons had landed. But if, in fact, you *did* the experiment, the fluorescent screen would show an *interference pattern*. (For those who don't know, interference patterns are wave-related structures that present themselves as a bright fringe, then a dark fringe, then a bright fringe, then a dark fringe, etcetera, extending from the center of the screen symmetrically outward to the right and left—the first photo is of an interference pattern with the second sketch animating the classical explanation of the *wave dynamics* that create such patterns.)


wave interference between slit sources
light fringes where waves superimpose constructively,
dark fringes where waves superimpose destructively
where peaks coincide with peaks and troughs with troughs, you get constructive interference
where a peak coincide with a trough, you get destructive interference
each slit generates a spherical wave
waves approaching double slit

Since electrons passing through a double-slit produce an interference pattern, we have to conclude that the particles we call *electrons* have a *wave property* to them (odd, but that's what observation demands). *Quantum Mechanics* is the mathematical model we've developed to deal with this strangeness. The model is not deterministic. What does this mean?

We know that when large numbers of electron individually pass through a double-slit over time, some will form part of one fringe, some part of another, some part of another. Where we get into trouble is when we try to zero in on just ONE electron. When we do that, we have *no idea* where that given electron will head. This is not laziness on the part of the model or the physicists who created it. It's nature's fault. Nature doesn't *allow* us to know what individual electrons are doing, just what the trend is for large numbers of electrons. As a consequence, Quantum Mechanics is a *probabilistic theory*. For the theory to be useful in predicting observation, it can only determine the *probability* that an electron will land on

a certain spot.

The theory does this by assuming there exists what is called a *wave function* associated with each electron. This wave function is what is said to interfere in the double-slit experiment producing the observed interference pattern (go back to that second sketch—you can see how the interaction of spherical waves generated by each slit produces the interference pattern). The obvious problem with all of this, at least from the perspective of making real-world sense of it, is that what *seems to be experiencing the action* (the wave function) is not a *physical* part of the electron (a structure, remember, that we tend to associate with particles).

The theory further assumes that ALL of the possible states the electron could be in (i.e., all the possible places it could land) are represented in the wave function as an enormous superposition of states (hence the famous Schrodinger's cat paradox: if we have a cat in a box and we haven't peeked in to see what state the cat is in, we must assume it is both dead AND alive at the same time, this being the *superposition* of the cat's two possible states).

This is mind bending by itself, but it gets worse. As I've said, slowly shooting single electrons at a double-slit will, over time, manifest an interference pattern. But if we try to determine which slit each electron truly travels through by *looking* to see where the electron goes (we could do this by putting a magnetic field detector off to the side next to or even *behind* one of the slits), the wave function "collapses" and the resulting pattern is NOT an interference pattern. Rather, we end up with *two bright fringes*, one for each slit. In short, if you shoot single electrons through the slits and DON'T look to see which slit each goes through, you will with time get an interference pattern. If you *DO* look, you lose the interference pattern finding instead two bright fringes. (Note that none of this is even remotely hinted at by the statement, "atoms are made up of particles like protons and electrons.")

In conclusion, the world of the very small is very odd and not at all what we in our small bubble of perception might expect (the Scottish mathematician and biologist JBS Haldane said in 1927, "My suspicion is that the universe is not only stranger than we suppose, it is stranger than we *can* suppose.").

This is just a taste of the wonders of the underlying physical world that supports you and me, but there is more!

_____x_____

[Painted into a corner . . .]

The physical world we have access to, our bodies included, seems to be quite stable. This is markable in more ways than you might think. Consider the following section from the E.Phil book:

> From P.W.C. Davies book, *The Accidental Universe* (with slight modification):
>
> The numerical values that nature has assigned to fundamental constants, constants such as the *charge on an electron* (1.602×10^{-19} coulombs), the *mass of a proton* ($1.67262192 \times 10^{-27}$ kg), the *speed of light* (2.99792458×10^{8} m/s), the *Newtonian gravitational constant* (6.67430×10^{-11} $N \cdot m^2/kg^2$), etc. (all of which were set at the Big Bang), may be mysterious, but they are crucially relevant to the structure of the universe that we perceive. As more and more physical systems, from nuclei to galaxies, have become better understood, scientists have begun to realize that many characteristics of these systems are remarkably sensitive to the *precise values* of the fundamental constants.
>
> More intriguing still, certain crucial structures, such as solar-type stars, depend for their characteristic features on *wildly improbable numerical accidents* that combine together fundamental constants from distinct branches of physics.
>
> Recent discoveries about the primeval cosmos oblige us to accept that the expanding universe has been set up in its motion with *a cooperation of astonishing precision*.[1]

[1] Make a change to the Gravitational Constant of *one part in* 10^{60} (which is to say, alter it by .0000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000001) and you will have no stars in your universe (and no stars means no *you*). Or change the universe's expansion rate by altering the cosmological constant by *one part in* 10^{120} (altering *it* by .00 0000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000

I concluded by saying, "Please note that the optimal phrases in this eloquent commentary is *wildly improbable numerical accidents* and *cooperation of astonishing precision*. The difficulty? *Where did all the precision come from?"* [2]

There is more. Again, from the E.Phil book (and remember, this book was written in 1992):

> This *apparent-precision* problem becomes even more evident when one looks at life. For example, how did the human body get to the state it is in now, given the fact that there was no life on this planet at the start? (Note not in the E.Phil book: this being the assumption that was accepted at the time of the writing).
>
> According to one theory,[3] things began billions of years ago when electric storms and intense ultraviolet radiation allowed the predominate chemical compounds in the earth's early atmosphere—nitrogen, hydrogen, water and methane—to interact and create complex chemical structures called *amino acids*.[4] Within a few hundred million years, the amino acids had combined to form even more complex molecules—DNA molecules—that were able to act as chemical templates for the replication of themselves (this is similar to the ability of crystalline structures to grow).
>
> The first life form—a virus—was nothing more than a

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[2] The previous two sections were included to give you a feel not only for the strangeness of the understructure of the physical world, but also how incredibly remarkable it is that our world even *exists* in physical form. I suspect that the Artifacers the Brothers occasionally talked about had a little something to do with all that wonder. The precision had to come from somewhere (and if you think it was just chance, keep reading).

[3] In fact, there are a number of competing theories out today, some more likely than the one about to be presented. That is all right. Whether this is *the true scenario* or not is not important. All we are concerned with here is the GENERAL TREND in scientific thinking concerning the evolution of life.

[4] In 1953, Stanley Miller concocted an experiment in which all the gasses listed above were bombarded by simulate lightning (a current was passed through the mélange), and he ended up producing "organic compounds" and twenty amino acids. This shouldn't have been a surprise. There had to be mechanisms in place to allow body-forms to sprout and grow. The real question is, "*Where* did these mechanisms come from?" That, presumably, is where Blavasky's (and the Brothers') Artificers come in.

DNA molecule surrounded by a sack of organic molecules called proteins. Over more time, random variations in the coded DNA produced additional proteins called enzymes which, in turn, allowed the first primitive cellular structures to form. Advanced cells developed as these primitive cells combined with viruses and began to coexist in a symbiotic relationship. Natural selection took things from there.

Mammals appeared approximately two-hundred-million-years ago; Homo Sapiens (early man) came a quarter-of-a-million-years ago.

As things stand today, the human body is made up of somewhere around *60,000,000,000,000* (sixty trillion) cells,[5] each of which carries the DNA plan for the entire complex. Each cell knows exactly where it fits into the blueprint, which is fortunate. If that were *not* the case, skin cells on your hand could mistakenly follow the blueprint for cells used in tooth enamel and you would end up with a hand as hard as a rock.

There are *75,000 miles* of capillaries, veins, and arteries in the body's blood transport system; the heart muscle pumps the equivalent of *500,000 tons* of blood in a normal lifetime.

The lungs are made up of *250,000,000* tiny air sacks, and the body's bone marrow produces *1,000,000* red blood cells *every second.*

There are *125,000,000* rod cells per eye with each cell containing *30,000,000* molecules of light-catching pigment. The eye can transmit *1,500,000* signals simultaneously to the brain, which contains *30,000,000,000* neurons. Each neuron can be connected to as many as *80,000* other neurons at once.

The body's DNA provides the immune system with the capacity to produce over *1,000,000,000* antibodies allowing

[5] How big is sixty trillion? If you had sixty trillion dollars and wanted to spend it, you would have to spend around $3,400,000 every hour, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for 2000 years to get rid of your money. That is, if you started at the time of Christ, you'd still have around $240-billion left to spend as of January 1992 when this book (the E.Phil book) was written.

the body the potential to fight off diseases that don't even exist yet. The liver can perform over *500* tasks, some of which cannot be easily duplicated today even in our finest chemical laboratories, and produces over *1,000* different enzymes (this in an organ the size of a football). Without its services, we would not be able to detoxify such poisonous materials as nicotine, caffeine, alcohol, and the myriad of other "food products" we human seem to indiscriminately ingest on a regular basis.

As each body part is enormously intricate within itself, when laced together into "the system," the living machine we end up with is absolutely beyond belief. Through the agency of a number of very sophisticated systems (the nervous system, the digestive system, the lymph system, etc.) the body has the ability to coordinate the activities of its very different, very independent parts (the liver, kidneys, brain, not to mention the astronomical number of individual cells that work together to make up these parts) in such a way as to allow it to survive *without any conscious effort on your part*.

It would take a large library to catalogue all we currently know about how the body works. It would probably take a city of libraries to catalogue all we don't know.

With all this in mind, think now about that nice, clean, tidy theory of evolution science has laid out before us. Noting that nature doesn't appear to migrate toward complexity on its own—science suggests that, if anything, it tends toward disorder (thermodynamic entropy)[6]—what are the odds something as remarkably complex as a human being evolved *by pure chance* from nothing more than *four molecular compounds and some lightning*?

A mid-1980 *Science News* article announced the revised results of two university professors who had done just that (that is, calculated the odds that humankind could have evolved to its current point from scratch). The old estimate was one chance in 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,

[6] Think about your room at home. It starts out sort of clean on Sunday. By Wednesday, is it cleaner? Not likely . . . Entropy!

000 (that is, one in one-trillion-trillion).[7] By doing some clever assuming, the professors had gotten it down to a more respectable *one chance in 100,000,000,000,000* (one-hundred-trillion).[8]

Put another way, you'd have a better chance of taking a cargo plane to 10,000 feet, dumping a half million bricks and five tons of mixed concrete out its bay doors, then expect to find the bricks landing *by chance* in such a way as to construct a completely finished, two story, old-English style home, complete with patio and Jacuzzi appropriately situated in the back yard.

Bottom line: As impressive as the aura of knowledge and rightness is around most scientific theories, science's *evolution by chance* scenario is so fantastically improbable that it ranks right up there with the literal version of *God made the world in seven days*.[9]

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[7] That is probably surprising, given the number of stars that exist within the universe, but not all stars are in a position to handle life-bearing planets. Planets in binary and trinary star systems (i.e., solar-type systems that have two or three stars in them; it is estimatd that 85% of all star systems are of this kind) don't have the temperature stability required to support life. Of the single-star system, not all have planets. Of those with planets, not all have planets the appropriate distance from the star (planets that are too far away would freeze; planets too close would have their atmosphere boiled away). Of the systems with planets at the appropriate distance, not all of those planets have atmospheres. Of those with atmospheres, not all have the right proportion of gasses. You get the idea . . .

[8] What is interesting is that if those same mathematicians had calculated the odds that *psychic phenomena* might be a reality, and if they had found it to be one chance in a million, they would surely have condemned as insane anyone who, in the face of those odds, still professed a belief in psychic phenomenon. Yet in perfect sincerity, scientists preach the belief that mankind evolved by chance from practically nothing with *a hundred-trillion to one odds* against the proposition.

[9] (Not in original text) It is interesting how modern scientists have gotten around both the *creation of life* and *fundamental constants* problem. The current theory acknowledges that it is beyond unlikely that everything could have fallen out by chance in just the right way for our universe to have come into existence as it did (the precision involved in the connectedness of the constants is proof enough) unless, of course, our universe is just one of an infinite number of universes that have come into existence over time. If there have been an infinite number of attempts, sooner or later the right combination would pop up and voila, here we would be. What isn't stated (or even noticed, apparently), is that you can't prove a theory like that. Accepting that there have been an infinite number of universes requires the same kind of thinking that is required of someone who maintains that *God made the world in seven days*. It's all based on faith, and that's not a good look for science. This is why a lot of scientists today are agnostics—they are willing to admit that they don't know.

My point with all of this is that when we talk about the physical vehicles nature has provided Beings like you and me, there is a lot going on underneath the surface that is not immediately evident and not, frankly, talked about much. Our bodies (and this place) really are quite remarkable, and there had to be a method to the madness.

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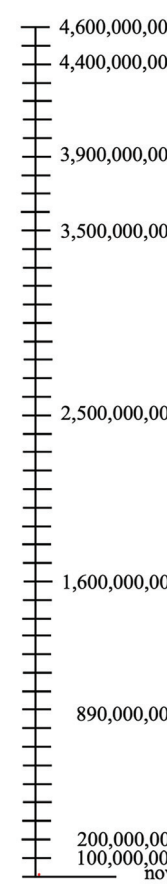
[And now, a word from our paleontologist friends . . .]

For the record (and to be complete), biologists and paleontologists have done a lot to work trying to figure out the apparent evolutionary progression of body-forms (which in their world is called "the evolution of life"). I found "a very reputable science journal" that speaks to this. It is in the webpages of the New Scientist (https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn17453-timeline-the-evolution-of-life/). Below you will find a paraphrased summary of what it said.

> The two primary tools biologists and paleontologists have in dating "life forms" on the planet are "radiocarbon dating of rocks in which fossils are found and examining the *molecular clocks* in the DNA of current living organisms." Using radiocarbon dating of both Earth and moon rocks, scientists have concluded that the Earth is 4.54-billion-years old. Assuming the Sun is a little bit older than the Earth, the Sun has been dated at 4.6-billion-years.
>
> By the 4.4-billion-year mark, the Earth had cooled and was almost entirely covered by water (the origin of the water is "a mystery," but apparently it was there). Where and when life began is not known, but there are scientists who believe that it was present in elementary, primitive (one-celled) form almost immediately (others believe its first signs showed around 3.7-billion-years ago). There is some genetic evident that around 3.9-billion-years ago, there was a "relatively complex microorganism" that existed in "volcanic or geothermal vents" that was the starting point for everything that lives today (this organism has been called the "Last Universal Common Ancestor," or LUCA—and by "genetic evidence," I suspect they

used the *molecular clock* approach to work backwards to when things must have started, and that's what they came up with). The oldest one-celled fossil (found in Australia) was dated at 3.5-billion-years (the timeline is provided to give you a sense of time spans). Viruses were found in 3-billion-year-old rock. Between 2.5 and 2.2-billion-years ago, "cyanobacteria" began photosynthesis producing widespread oxygen. Cells with "internal organs" (mitochondria) showed around 2-billion-years ago. Multi-celled organism like seaweed arrived around 1.6-billion-years ago, though it isn't obvious what motivated this situation. Sometime around 890-million-years ago the first "recognizable" animals came into existence. Though the cause is not known, at 630-million-years animals generate bilateral symmetry. At 540-million-years we have the first animals with backbones. Trilobites arrive 530-million-years ago. At 515-million-years, plants begin to colonize the land. Four-legged animals were spotted 397-million-years ago, and a little later (385-million-years) we find the first trees. Around the 233-million-year mark, proto-mammals evolved warm bloodedness. Around the 200-million-year mark, we find the first dinosaurs (these continue to dominate until around the 66-million-year mark when a meteor strike darkened the sky, brought on a "nuclear winter" of sorts, and they died out). The first bird, a dinosaur offshoot, arrives around 150-million-years ago. Flowering plants show up at 125-million-years. At 70-million-years we get grasslands. 50-million-years ago we get hoofed mammals. At 47-million-years we have primitive whales. At 25-million-years, apes and monkeys split. At 2.8-million-years, the human genus appears in Africa. And from 11,000-years on we have domination by man (this is designated on the time line as a tiny, tiny, tiny red dot at the bottom).



This is a very impressive chronicling of the existence of life-forms throughout the earth's history, and assuming the numbers are accurate (the folks who put together the Web site pointed out that the farther you go back in time, the less certain you can be with your conclusions), it looks as though life-forms capable of supporting Consciousness on one level or another have been available almost since the beginning.

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[So do we have our timeline wired?]

Shifting gears just a bit, our understanding of human history over that last 11,000 years is probably pretty good if you are talking about "normal" human activity,[10] but probably not so dead-on if you are talking about the evolution of Beings. Additionally, as nature is quite capable of wiping clean the telltale signs of failed existence, it is possible that there might be aspects of our history that are not at all evident. The great flood mentioned in the Bible, for instance, could have been motivated by a highly technological society that had run amuck (Atlantis?). When it had its casings on, there was apparently a water mark halfway up the side of the Great Pyramid that has never been explained. Maybe it had to do with that flood. In any case, there is at least a chance that our understanding of the ancient world is a bit narrow and not as on-target as we think.

Crazy talk? Consider: According to historians, the world around 3000 BC was relatively primitive. Humans had just recently begun to use the adze (a primitive hoe) to till the land. There was not, according to the story, a lot of technological sophistication (I'll say more about this in the book's second volume).

Against that backdrop, there is a structure from the ancient world that just doesn't fit. It is the Great Pyramid of Giza. Egyptologists have long claimed that it was built around 3000 BC and was nothing more than the tomb of the pharaoh Cheops (the Egyptian name for the pharaoh Khufu).[11]

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[10] The academicians who work on stuff like this are stalwart and quite devoted, and some are quite brilliant. That they have been able to piece together what-all we know at this point, given the sparse evidence they have at their disposal, is admirable.

[11] A number of things: To begin with, as best I know, the primary evidence that it was built by Kufu was graffiti found on one of the 140,000-pound blocks reinforcing the roof of the King's Chamber. That's it. Graffiti with no date. We have no idea *which* Kufu we are talking about or even if the graffiti was supposed to glorify the actual builder (how many Hispanic taggers do you know go around painting the word BIDEN on walls? Very weak!)

Additionally, years ago a group of German tourists who happened to be geologists noticed that the Sphinx, which was created before the pyramid but not, necessarily, *hugely* before the pyramid, had erosion on it. What was bizarre was that it was not wind erosion, as one would expect in the desert, but rather WATER erosion. According to the geologists, the last time the area had the kind of water needed to generate that kind of erosion was 15,000 years ago, suggesting that the Sphinx (and probably the pyramid) was CONSIDERABLY older than Egyptologist and archaeologists claimed. The geologists evidently published a

Except it wasn't. It was, in fact, a place of the Brothers. There is no way historians and archeologists would know this, except they did have clues that might have let them in on the secret if they'd been a little more open minded. The clues?

Remembering that this structure was supposedly built 5000 years ago (though as I pointed out in the footnote, some believe it is considerably older), the structure is monumental (it is the last of the *Seven Wonders of the Ancient World*), being 755-feet in length (two-and-a-half football-fields long) and 481-feet tall (that's one-and-a-half foot-

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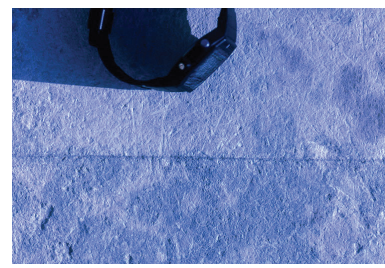
paper pointing this out. It caused a huge brouhaha resulting in the geologists being slapped with a restraining order forbidding them to get within a 1000-meters of the complex. To my knowledge, nobody has addressed the mismatch to date with much more than bluster.

And if that isn't enough to trip your fancy, tomb-robbers were not known for their neatness. The Muslim Caliph al Mamun was the guy who apparently broke into the intact pyramid after the Muslims conquered the region (the conquest happened in 641 AD; al Mamun live around 800 AD). The tools of the time weren't good enough to penetrate the rock, so his people built huge fires against the limestone, heating it to red-hot, then quenched it with vinegar to make the stone break (a sudden temperature change will do that to rock). They then picked away at the cracked stone. They did this over and over again until they had a hole 100-feet deep into the pyramid (if you were to visit the site today, you would enter through the passageway al Mamun dug—it's called "Mamun's hole"). According to the story, he was about to give up, running into nothing but rock, when his people heard a thud off to the side. Digging toward the sound, they broke into what is now called *the descending passage*. They were met with fresh air (very freaky—this pyramid is the only one in the world that has air ducts in it). According to the Brothers, al Mamun entered by himself, wanting to be the first to see all the wealth that was surely entombed with the mummy, but found nothing in what is called the King's Chamber except the granite bottom of a sarcophagus holder. (I'm pretty sure I remember the Brothers saying that because al Mamun had promised spoils to his lieutenants, he had to smuggle treasure into the pyramid the night before his people were allowed to enter.) This was very strange. If tomb robbers had ransacked the room in ancient times, stuff would have been strewn all over the place. Canopic jars would have been broken; the wrappings of the mummy would have been torn into looking for jewels wrapped in the linens enshrouding the body; the place would have been a mess. That wasn't what he found. The place was clean as a whistle. Given all that, I've often wondered why people haven't themselves wondered why such an enormous place would have been built AND COMPLETED if there was to be no body entombed there. Answer: it wasn't a tomb in the first place with that sarcophagus holder having a purpose other than holding a mummy.

ball-fields worth). (Look closely at the photo on the previous psge and you will see tiny specks on the causeway in front of the pyramid—those are people . . . and in the photo on the right, which I also took, there are people in that one, also, so you can see how big each building block is in comparison).

The pyramid is made up of approximately 2,500,000 limestone blocks each weighing 5,000-pound (though there are a few 140,000-pound blocks shoring up the roofing of internal structures and a few granite blocks originally used as plugs for the passageways).

The structure was originally covered with highly polished limestone casings (supposedly covered with hieroglyphs) whose dimensions were 5'x7'x10' (this is not what the Internet quotes, but it's what I believe Peter Tompkins said in his book *Secrets of the Great Pyramid*). These casings were so finely fitted together that you couldn't get a sheet of paper between the facing joints (Brian knew where the last two in-place casings were on the pyramid, so he took the picture shown to the right—the line through the middle is the joint; the object at the top is his watch, for scale; you can see how finely fitted the casings were, and the whole pyramid was like that). Before the covering were removed by the Muslims to make the Sultan Hassan Mosque in Cairo, the pyramid's face looked like a continuous sheet of polished limestone 755-feet long and 481-feet high. In fact, in ancient times it was called *the light* because it stood so brilliantly in sunlight that it could be seen from hundreds of miles away.



The structure is level to 3/8-inch over 400-feet (think about that—if you were asked to build a 400-foot-long, six-foot tall brick wall, and if it had to be absolutely level, you could probably do that if you were careful. The builders of the pyramid accomplished the feat with a structure comprised of 2,500,000 *five-thousand-pound blocks*. This is not chopped liver.)

The structure is oriented exactly north, south, east and west.[12]

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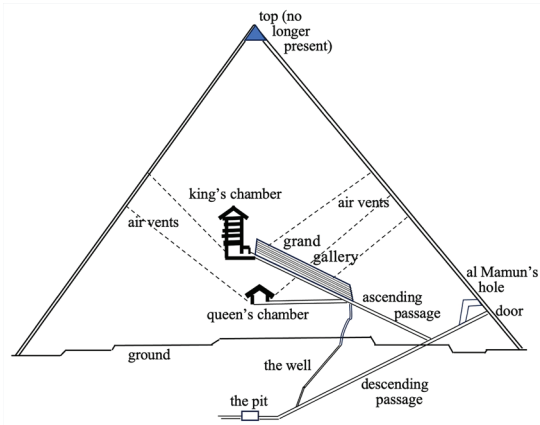
[12] The angular displacement from true north has been measured to be 3.4 arcminutes. (For those of you who don't know, if you take a one-degree angle and divide it into sixty parts,

The angle of the pyramid's sides are such that the pyramid "swallowed its shadow" (has all four sides lit by the sun) only once a year at noon on the solstice (i.e., when the sun is as far north as it will ever get).

The descending passage, which is *less than* 4-foot wide and 4-foot tall



(and a real pain in the ass to move through as you are bent over throughout), starts at the pyramid's doorway (which was concealed when the casings were on but is now open) and extended 345-feet at a slant downward to a short horizontal passageway leading to a small, unfinished room at the bottom of the pyramid dubbed "the pit." The slanted portion of the 345-foot section is absolutely, dead-on straight. That means you could stand at the bottom of the passageway in the middle of the day, look up the passageway, and see a tiny patch of sky coming in through the open door (think about how straight the passageway would have to be to do that, and think about how amazingly hard it would be to place 5000-pound blocks as the pyramid was being built so a passageway of that nature *could* exist in the structure). What's more incredible is that if you did this at night, you would see a star in the middle of the doorway opening *that would never move*. That is because the passageway is aimed directly at the *north star*, the star that resides directly over the Earth's geographic north pole (that is, the north star is located along the axis about which the earth rotates which is why it never appears to move in the sky as the earth rotates about its axis).

The King's Chamber is a perfect resonating chamber. If you stand quietly at one wall and softly sing a single note, the room will boom with sound within seconds (I've experienced this). In fact, the *entire structure* is a perfect resonating vessel. If you stand in the King's Chamber (in the middle of the pyramid), you can hear conversations being had by people standing at the outside doorway approximately 300-feet away . . . with nothing but solid rock and a very small passageway between you and them (I've experienced this, also). (I have to say, though, that you have to be

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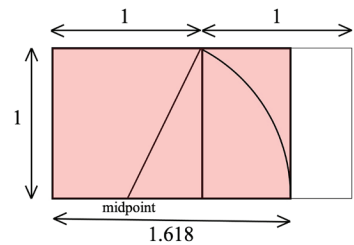
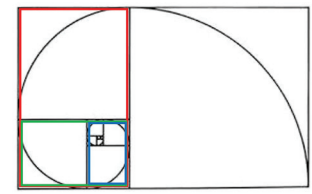
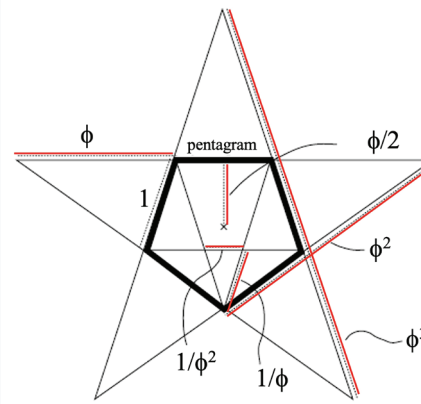
each part will be one arcminute. In degrees, 3.4 arcminutes is the same as 0.0567^{o}.)

there when there are no tourists about mucking up the effects. I was lucky. I was there when there were only three other people in the entire structure, which is unheard of . . . and though I never asked, this may have been a giftie from the Brothers).

And if you like mathematics, you'll love the Great Pyramid. There were, in ancient times, numbers that were deemed sacred. For instance, if you take the ratio of any two successive numbers in the Fibonacci Series (once you've gotten four or five places into the series), the ratio will converge on a transcendental number (one that goes on forever, like pi) that is usually rounded to 1.618. Given the name Phi (ϕ), it is the basis of the *golden rectangle* (sides in a ratio of 1 to 1.618—see sketch) that pervaded Greek architecture, and the *logarithmic spiral* (see the next sketch) that underlies many physical structures in nature (the chambered nautilus, the seed pattern of a sunflower, the shape of spiral galaxies, the curvature of the ear). (Note also that in the logarithmic spiral sketch, each of the rectangles used to produce the spiral are golden rectangles themselves, which is to say, each has a sides ratio of 1:1.618 . . . kind of amazing).

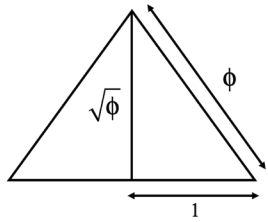






This is a number with wild mathematical properties ($1/\phi + 1 = \phi$; $1 + \phi = \phi^2$, etc., not to mention the previously noted fact that a golden rectangle has an infinite number of golden rectangles inside it). It wasn't for nothing that the secret society of the Pythagoreans used the pentagram as their symbol. (Why? Because if you define the innermost section of a pentagram to be *one* (see sketch), you get sections of length $1/\phi$, ϕ, ϕ^2, etc.)

The point is, ϕ was one of those sacred numbers, and it is found in the pyramid (as shown in the sketch on the next page, if the base of a right-triangle drawn on the pyramid's outline is defined as one, you end up with



a hypotenuse of 1.618 and a third side of *the square root of 1.618*). And if that's not impressive enough for you, you can easily find ratios in the pyamid that yield pi to a couple of decimal points (just as 2pi times the radius of a circle yields the circle's circumference, 2pi times the pyramid's height yields its perimeter).

The point is that the pyramid, along with all of its other dumbfounding characteristics, has math, *sacred math*, shot throughout.

This place exists. You can visit it (assuming the politics of the area aren't fraught).[13] But it certainly doesn't fit neatly into the story historians have told about humankind and the ancient world. Five-thousand-years ago when this structure was built (assuming it *was* built five-thousand-years ago), historians picture humankind running around half-naked (metaphorically speaking), just having learned how to farm. Something is missing, and that something is knowledge of the presence of the Brotherhood.[14]

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[13] When I used to talk to my students about this place as a part of my Parting Shot at the end of the school year, I included the following warning: Although I have friends who are Muslim, who are very fine people and who I would trust with my life, there are sects of the Muslim faith that don't believe women have souls. As a consequence, they believe that women have been placed on Earth solely for the pleasure of man. When I was in Cairo (I was traveling with Cathy's daughter), a young boy approached Alex and I at the Great Pyramid and asked if he could have sex with "the woman" (I'm cleaning up his language--it was quite crude.) My first thought was to smack him, but I figured he had to have friends in the area who would come to his aid, so we ignored him. The point I was making for my students, and the point I'm making to you if you happen to be a woman, is that Egypt is not Europe where a woman can hitchhike across the continent in relative safety. If you go to Egypt (or any of the Muslim countries), as irritating as this is to feminists, you need to go with a man or, at the very least, in a group. It is not safe to go alone. (And again, this is a relatively small part of the Muslim population, but it is a faction that is not to be messed with.)

[14] I should mention that people don't generally know about the Brothers, and they additionally don't like mysteries. Consequence? There are people who believe ancient astronauts came and built the pyramid because, well, *humans* certainly couldn't have done it. Egyptologists think it was built by slaves rolling those 5000-pound blocks up ramps using rollers. Nobody seems to have noticed that to build a 100-foot-wide ramp (the width being for stability) at an angle of 1^0, the builders would have had to have used SIX TIMES THE MATERIAL that went into the pyramid itself . . . and that there is no evidence that something like that happened, no remnants, no nothing. So how was it built? I'm not qualified to comment, but I can say what Kay told me. She had a friend who was a very, very high Mason, someone who had access to Masonic manuscripts that very few had access to, who

So where is all of this going? That "timeline for life" that we looked at a ways back, it may be an accurate depiction of where the body-forms we associate with life came from. Then, again, it may not be. The research is interesting and seemingly very scholarly, but I'm pretty sure we don't know everything there is to know when it comes to our *existence in matter*.

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[Consciousness]

Having talked about the vehicles we animate as we experience in matter, it's time to think more about Consciousness itself. Although the Brothers did talk about some of what I'm about to discuss, they never took the time to really pin all of it down for us. They didn't do that, I believe, because they knew that knowing about this stuff wasn't really important. What was important was the kind of Being we were becoming. I, unfortunately, am curious about the way things work, so I've used what the Brothers *did* say along with some of my own thoughts to cobbled together my own theory as to what Consciousness is all about. I may be wrong about some of this, but it makes sense to me. And a warning: We'll be getting into the weeds pretty quickly. Don't get hung up on the minutia. Just keep reading and everything will hopefully come together in the end . . . and again, remember that this stuff isn't very important.

So far, I've identified Consciousness at the human level in two ways. I've said it is *a part of the Mind of God*, which is fine but doesn't really take you anywhere if you want to understand its form, and I've said it is *your ability to be aware*, which is better because that is at least something you touch in your everyday life. Additionally, the latter is reflected in the language we use to identify the idea—we talk about an Aware-ness or a Conscious-ness or a Be-ing.

The problem is that none of this help us understand what the Master was telling our group when He said that at enlightenment, he "simply acknowledged the presence of His child-self, told it that it was good and useful, then once it was feeling comfortable and secure just walked away

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told her that one of those documents maintained that the blocks of the Great Pyramid were *sung into place*. I wouldn't want to argue with anyone about this, but given that this was a place of the Brothers, nothing would surprise me. Remember *pu ent?*

from it quietly." How does that fit into the picture? I've said the child-self is the part of you that you identify with when you use the word *me*, but where did that self come from, and what is it, really?

To answer this, we need to look at the idea of Consciousness from a wider perspective, and to start I'm going to give it another definition. I think of Consciousness at its core as *a sentient energy form*.

Before poopooing this somewhat Star Trek-ish bit of verbiage, think about it. From what I've already said, Consciousness is something that has a purpose. Its task is to master *existence in matter*. And to effect that end, I (and the Brothers) have maintained that it has the ability to meld into physical form, using that form as a vehicle (for humans, we call this *incarnation*).

There are two roadblocks to understanding how this works. First, people assume Consciousness in general is like the Consciousness they are familiar with, which is to say, *their* Consciousness. And second, people unconsciously assume that the only physical forms Consciousness can animate are the forms we are familiar with on this planet.[15]

The fly in the ointment is that neither of those assumptions are necessarily true.[16]

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[15] Years ago, I read about scientists who were looking for sentient Beings, ET, *out there* amongst the stars. I remember thinking how amusing is was that there is Consciousness right here on Earth, right under their noses, that they are completely oblivious to.

[16] I chaperoned over 90 week-long outdoor education trips during my time at Poly, but only two were for the Middle School. One of those was a backpacking trip into the back country of Big Sur in central California (below San Simeon). At night, the sky was clear and brilliantly blanketed with stars (the same stars the ancients viewed *every night*). One night, lying there looking up, I thought back to something I wrote in the E.Phil book (modified considerably) about stars and, specifically, *our* star:

> Many ancient peoples believed that our star, the Sun, was a great Being. Modern science naturally scoffs at such primitive ideas. In this case, science is the one that is wrong.
>
> If an enormously evolved Being was given the task of overseeing and nurturing the development of an entire evolution of "lesser" Beings—Beings like you and me—what kind of body-form would you expect it to animate? Human form is great for the kind of things we humans need to deal with, but a Consciousness at that level?
>
> Science can talk knowledgably about the human body. It can tell you how the body is formed in the womb, how its individual parts work, why

_____x_____

[The beginning of what?]

Along with everything I already said, talking about Awareness *in the beginning of this solar evolution* is a little dicey because doing so assumes

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it needs oxygen, why it gets old and ceases to function at death. If you have a question about the human body, science probably has a pretty good answer. What science can't speak to, though, is the Consciousness that animates the body. They have no ground to stand on when it comes to talking about you and me as Beings, only the body-form we sport.

Just as is the case with the human body, science can knowledgably talk about the physical body that is our star (and all stars). It can tell us its surface temperature and its core temperature. It can tell us its diameter and the time it takes to rotate once about its axis. It can tell us how it generates the energy it radiates into space. It can tell us how sunspots are related to magnetic fields. It can tell us how solar winds are produced and why solar prominences exist. But just as science knows about the human body while knowing nothing about the Consciousness that animates the human form, science knows nothing about the Consciousness that animates our star, *or any star*.

Put in an altogether different context, a very ancient context, if there is a purpose to life—if there is a God or Divine Mind—and if there is a spiritual evolution going on in the universe in general and our solar system in particular, would you not expect to find a guardian at the center of our (and every) evolution—a nurturing, supporting Being that is One with that infinitely loving, creative, always expanding Consciousness we call God?

And when these great, benevolent Beings take up physical embodiment, one that would allow them to bathe their charges in the Light of their presence, what kind of a form might they take?

As an ancient Egyptian-inspired poem suggests:

Even as the Sun, the eternal, shines forever,
From His Light grow the worlds;
So the lighted soul reflects that mighty One,
Whose Light shall create and renew the lives of men.

Without our star, we would not be here. Neither would our planet (which is animated by an immense Consciousness itself), nor any of the others. Our world and our presence exists by the grace of our star. It upholds us completely. And what a wonder the night sky reveals . . . all those twenty-million-trillion plus stars . . . all that Consciousness. How immense the mind of God.

that our evolution as Consciousnesses has taken place solely on this planet during the timeframe we have been taught in school. This is another problem.

As I said earlier, *The Mahatma Letters* was a compilation of letter between Sinnett in India and the Brothers. The book was/is a cataloging of the Brothers' responses to questions Sinnett's posed (not, unfortunately, the actual questions themselves, just the answers). A considerable amount of the book is devoted to discussion of what are called "the inner and outer rounds."

When I read *The Mahatma Letters*, I thought Sinnett's questions were a waste of the Brother's time. They were interesting in an intellectual sense because they pushed forward a discussion of what the Brothers called *the life force* as it proceeded over eons of time from one planet to the next, but they had nothing to do with what the Brothers seem to think was important in their contact with us. What does it mean to be human? What motivates you? How does one live a better life?

Ignoring that quibble, I suspect Sinnett's questions came from his reading of Blavasky's *The Secret Doctrine*. Being one of the "guarded objects" in the Brothers' possession, this was her translation of an ancient text that explains in intricate detail the creation and evolutionary journey of "the soul."[17] The book is humungous. My six-volume set spans *two thousand pages* and has an index *440-pages* long. Cathy said she started it a few times (as did I) but was stymied fairly quickly. There is a lot of Sanskrit in it, all of which Blavasky explains in commentary, but the breadth of knowledge there is staggering and something that is way beyond my bandwidth. If anything, it highlighted the fact that what I, with my scientific training, thought was a fairly complicated but understandable history of life, was anything but.

What I guess it comes down to is that according to Blavasky and the Brothers, talking about what's happening with *Consciousness* here on Earth is to start *in the middle* of our overall evolution . . . and that, for simplicity, is where I intend to begin (in the "middle" here on Earth).

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[But first, a little more about *the inner and outer rounds* . . .]

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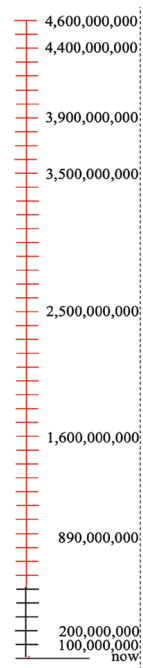
[17] If you remember, I earlier told a story about Blavasky having one of her auric sheeves controlled by the Brothers because she was being given access to something chelas aren't normally given access to. I'm pretty sure this was what that something was.

If you find this book interesting and decide to go looking for others written about the Brothers, there is a good chance you will come across *The Mahatma Letters*. In that book, you will run into the idea of *the inner and outer rounds*. I have a very strong feeling that to fully grasp the ideas wrapped around these topics, you need to understand a lot of "esoteric stuff" that I'm pretty certain I don't have access to. I know the Brothers didn't talk to us about it hardly at all, so I'm thinking they didn't see it as important enough to burn energy on. I've mentioned it above, though, and kind of started the ball rolling here, so I feel some responsibility for providing background as best I can. That is what this section is about. Here are my thoughts.

As our paleontologist friends pointed out earlier, there is a good chance that very elementary vehicles existed on Earth almost from the beginning. It was nature's task to build the forms; science has done a good job of determining when the forms became available. It is important to note, though, that most of the forms for most of the Earth's history were very primitive. Plants on land didn't come into existence until 500-million years ago, and trees not until 385-million years ago (the red section of the timeline shown identifies all the time there were NO advanced body-forms for Consciousnesses to animate). That means there was nearly 4-billion years between the formation of the earth and the availability of land-based plants and trees forms. Add to this the observation that the most primitive of human bodies didn't become available until around 2-million years ago (remember that red dot?), give or take, and it wasn't until 11,000-years ago that humankind really blossom (there were around a million human body-forms available for Consciousness to animate 10,000 years ago—there are 8.5 *billion* now) and you are left with an interesting question. *What were those Consciousnesses doing during that first 4-billion years when the higher-level bodies needed for their existence-in-matter had not yet been formed by nature?*



Answer: According to *The Secret Doctrine* and the Brothers, they were either waiting in *the inner worlds* or they were experiencing on another of the planets courtesy of *the inner and outer rounds*.

My time with the Brothers started in the very early 1970's. I do not remember the Brothers ever talking to our small group about *the inner and outer rounds*, but Cathy said she was in a meeting with the TRY founders early on when the Brothers did broach the subject. She said she found the discussion mind-blowing.

According to her, the Brothers said that the last planet *the life-force* animated was Venus. If a scientist had been ease dropping on that meeting, he/she would surely have thought *poppycock*. Everyone (at least in the scientific community) knows that Venus rains sulfuric acid and has a surface temperature high enough to melt lead. Except that bit of information may be misleading. In 2019, the folks at the *Goddard Institute of Space Science* published a research paper that suggested that Venus may have had "surface water and habitable conditions for 3-billion years, this being the case until around 700-million years ago . . . "

As tantalizing as the results of this study may be if you are looking for at least *a whiff of scientific confirmation* that Consciousness might have animated forms on other planets, it needs to be noted that it is always dangerous to rely on science when dealing with esoteric matters (and if anything, *the evolution of Consciousness* and *the inner and outer rounds* are esoteric). As wonderful as science is when it comes to understanding physical mechanisms, its view of the world is, by its very nature, limited, and pretty clearly subject to change. If you'd have asked a scientist before the year 1800 if the Sun orbits the Earth, they would have sniffed, "Of course it does." Why? Because that is what the Sun appears to be doing (it comes up in the east, transits across the sky during the day and goes down in the west . . . and *I* am surely not moving so *it* must be). Ask a scientist before 1915 if gravity exists and their bomb-proof understanding of the world would have motivated them to sniffed (once again), "Of course it does." Why? Because if you stumble, you fall, and without a gravitational force on it, how would the moon orbit the Earth? Except according to Einstein and his *General Theory of Relativity*, gravity *doesn't* exist. Gravitational *effects* happen—things fall and planets orbit—but that is the consequence of massive objects interacting with the geometry of the "curved," four-dimensional space in which they reside. This was not known before 1915, so in *their* world, gravity was a thing.

There is a good chance that *the inner and outer rounds* are linked in some way to the *inner worlds* I and the Brothers have talked about, yet science knows nothing *about* the inner worlds. Science thinks *thought* is formless and without energy. Science believes *Consciousness* is noth-

ing more than a neurological aberration, an illusion, generated by human brains. None of this is science's fault. It is constrained both intellectually and ethically to focus on physical mechanisms and physical mechanisms alone,[18] but even some of its observational conclusions about the physical world don't make sense (think about that wave function we had to assume existed to explain why electrons do what they do). Expecting science to have something definitive to say about esocteric matters is senseless.

My point? You can't necessarily depend upon scientific findings to support esotericism because there is more going on with esotericism than simple, physical mechanisms. Science *may* in some cases support an esoteric idea, but if it doesn't it doesn't mean the idea is bogus.[19]

That last observation was brought home in 2023. Studies like the one from the Goddard folks are powered by computer simulations that are based on assumptions that are deemed reasonable coupled with whatever data is thought to be apropos. The model used by the Goddard people made the assertion I quoted above. But in 2023, a group from the University of Chicago produced their own model using their own assumptions and concluded that this earth-friendly condition was only available on Venus for a billion years in its early life, not most of the last three-and-a-half billion years as the Goddard model suggested. So if you were depending upon science corroboration for *the inner and outer rounds* idea, this new study could put doubt in your mind . . . or not.

As unhelpful as this is going to be, I don't really have that problem as I wasn't depending upon the Goddard conclusions for validation. I have had way too much experience with the Brothers to doubt them (think back to all the stories I've told). When the Brothers said that nature's duty is to provide an environment that is appropriate for the necessities of the Consciousnesses that would animate form on a given planet, I accepted it. And

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[18] In fact, that was the deal scientists made with the Vatican back in around 1640. As long as scientists didn't delve in "metaphysical concepts" (does God exist; what happens when you die, etc.), it (the Church) would not burn you (the scientist) at the stake for such heresies as suggesting that the Sun might not orbit the Earth (as Galileo did) or that Aristotle was wrong about just about everything (Aristotle being the Church's guy). Stick to the physical world and you are safe.

[19] "The mind is the slayer of the real" (from Blavasky in The Voice of the Silence and possibly a re-quote from the Upandishads). Going beyond the observation that you and I just don't know all there is to know about this place, there has been some quite fascinating thinking centered on the idea that an esoteric, inner truth may not seem reasonable to the rational mind. Zen Buddhist utilize koans, nonsensical sayings (*what is the sound of one hand clapping?*) to exhaust the "noisy, reasonable mind" so that the Higher Mind might whisper wisdom to you. There is a tradition here . . .

if there was a necessity for Consciousness to experience on Venus, I am willing to accept that nature would have found a way to make that happen. Science is good, but it is only as good as is our understanding of the world, and that is not so very broad when it comes to the world of the esoteric.

Having said all that, what is *really* important (as far as I'm concerned) is that NONE OF THIS MATTERS. There is no way any of this will ever be proven one way or the other. Knowing about *the inner and outer rounds* is not going to make you a kinder, more thoughtful person (this being what the Brothers were most focused on). It is interesting as a curiosity, but its only real use, aside from suggesting that your world and your "self" may be considerably different than you realize, is in giving skeptics something to scoff at. In short, don't follow those early theosophists down a rabbit hole with this stuff. That's not the way to go.

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[Consciousness that hasn't yet immersed itself deeply into matter . . .]

Moving now in a little different direction, my understanding from what I think the Brothers said was that "in the beginning" (and remember, "in the beginning of our planetary evolution" is, according to *The Secret Doctrine*, in the *middle* of the actual evolution), there were different levels of Consciousness either waiting formless within the inner worlds as our world physically unfolded or involved with other evolutionary experiences. Of the former, some were Being who had already evolved in separate evolutions and were ready to take up *human form* as soon as it was ready, and some were Consciousnesses that hadn't yet immersed themselves far enough into matter, and who were *not* yet ready for human form.

Let's look at that last situation. Let's say there is a massive, undifferentiated Consciousness that has not yet immersed itself deeply into matter, but is moving in that direction. What kind of vehicle might be appropriate for that Being to experience through?

The answer to that would obviously be determined by how far that Being had already gone, but there is a chance that the ideal vehicle would be found in the plant kingdom. Again, what I said in the E.Phil book:

Plant forms provide experience that is decidedly non-psychological (psychology being important to humans but certainly not important for Beings at less immersed levels). Plants are strongly oriented around *service to the whole*. They haven't the mobility of an animal, but they don't need that because that is not their focus. Their focus is to support the higher kingdoms. To that end, plants and trees are the primary living organisms that convert energy in the form of sunlight into chemical energy in the form of sugars that can be used as food by animals, humans included. In the process, plants and trees convert carbon dioxide to oxygen producing almost all the free oxygen available in the atmosphere (hence, practically all the oxygen we breathe). They are constantly cleansing the atmosphere of both human and natural pollutants; they are a source of healing agents for animal forms (most of the drugs being produced by drug companies these days are chemical compounds that were found through plant research); they stabilize the land by diminishing the loss of topsoil due to wind and water erosion; and they are instrumental in maintaining regional climatic stability. In short, the plant kingdom is very deeply involved in the selfless support of the kingdoms above it, and that tone of selflessness has been characteristic of it since the beginning. If an undifferentiated Consciousness (that is, one that hasn't yet come to the point where its parts need to feel themselves as separate entities as is the case with humankind), what better form to animate as Consciousness gently immerses itself into matter?

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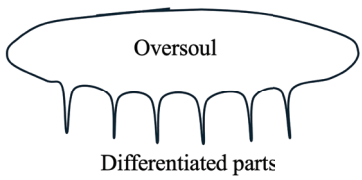
[Compartmentalization through differentiation . . .]

There is another twist I should mention concerning Consciousness. This has to do with the idea of differentiation.

According to the Brothers, and going back to the plant kingdom, the level of Consciousness that animates form from the plant realm acts as experiencer *through many forms of the same type*, kind of like an *Oversoul*. With time, parts of that Being will begin to differentiate.

As an example, an Oversoul might animate all the petunias in, say, South America. As the petunias in a particular region begin to focus on their own experiences to the exclusion of experiences being had by petunias in other parts of South America, the Oversoul (the Being) begins to migrate from a single, undifferentiated Awareness to several mini-Awareness that are still a part of the whole, but that have their own concerns (so to speak). In other words, as the Oversoul becomes more adept at existence in matter, it begins to segment into parts (see the sketch) with each differentiated, compartmentalized part acting like an Oversoul unto itself. This process repeats itself over and over again as the mini-Oversouls themselves fragment, experiencing in fewer but more complex plant forms as they evolve.[20]

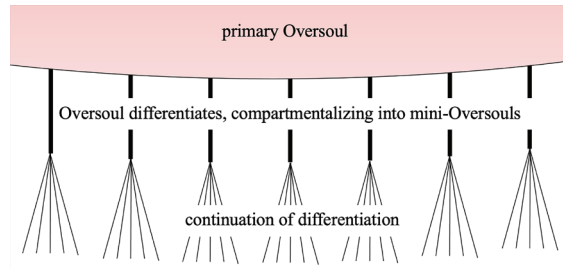


Continuing with this idea in the E.Phil book, I wrote:

> There is a limit to the experience differentiated Consciousness can accrue from its association with plant forms. The next logical step would be to move into vehicles that could allow It a more evolved "awakening" into matter. That, as far as this scenario is concerned, is exactly what animal forms do. Fitted with limited brains, instincts, mobility, and providing an immense range of embodiments from the one-celled amoeba to the mammal that acts as companion to man (Marmaduke and *el pussy gato*), animal-forms allow Consciousness to expand even further into existence and experience in matter.
>
> On the lower animal levels, Consciousness-when-in-matter still acts like an Oversoul, experiencing simultaneously through large numbers of physical vehicles at once. But as It grows into the necessity to experience in more complex ways, Consciousness again begins to compartmentalize. It does so by naturally dividing over time into what appear to be individualized units. This process repeats itself over and over (see sketch on the next page) and, as the process proceeds, the "new" mini-Oversouls will animate fewer, yet more-highly-ordered animal vehicles. And as this hap-

[20] If this is not crystal clear, don't despair, I've taken another shot at explaining it and differentiation at the end of this chapter.

pens with these Oversoul-selves narrowing their focus more and more, they will (at least while in a body) draw their immediate awareness *away from all else* . . . and in doing so begin to feel separate from the Whole.



When it becomes time for the Consciousness wrapped up in these mini-Oversouls to step through the gateway separating animals from humans, all that changes. Each has differentiated to the point where the kinds of experiences needed to continue to grow requires isolation. Now, when animating a body, each must so completely meld with its single vehicle that It all but forgets its link to the One Self.

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[Consciousness at the human level . . .]

I've been talking about vehicles and Consciousness in general. Now its time to think specifically about what Consciousness is at the human level.

Coming to grips with the creative energies of the Divine Mind, reflected in our ability to *think creatively* and the *freedom of will* that is required for true creativity, that is where individualized Consciousness at the human level (still a part of the Whole, but unaware of that fact) is headed. There is an entire system set up to allow the Being to do this: there is reincarnation which allows it access to many bodies in many situations over a long period of time, and there is karma to keep track of its progress and provide it with opportunities for growth.

When this Being metaphorically walks through the door into the human realm, it is given the tools through *personal thought* to create within itself whole universes of thought.[21] It is initially driven by the instincts

[21] One of the Brothers once said of us that we were *sleeping Gods*. I suspect this is what he was talking about.

that come with the animal body it sports (self-preservation being one of them) along with whatever additional thought-forms it might draw around itself through its ability to think creatively. Some of these thought-forms will have a lasting quality (i.e., lovingness), some will be attached to not-so-lasting qualities (jealousy, self-pity, brutishness, etc., all of which are illusory in the sense that they are *here today, gone tomorrow*). The totality of these thought-forms create for itself a kind of mental *facade* that the Being uses to interface with the physical world.

This facade is important to understand. Thought has energy and a kind of life of its own, so as a Being evolves in a spiritual sense, the *lasting qualities* the facade builds into the self will take on a life of their own. This manifests as the *higher-side* of the personal-self. The qualities that are purely self-involved and not lasting will also take on a life of their own. They manifest and are known as the *lesser-side* of the personal-self. In other words, the Being, through its animation of that façade, becomes a kind-of parent to something that is "alive," the higher and lower side of what is collectively called the *child-self*. When in a body, this child-self is what the Being experiences through and, in fact, is what you identify with when you use a word like *me*.

In summary, what you are looking at when you view a human Being is really two selves in one, the higher and lower "personal" child-self that has taken over the task of experiencing and making choices and even using thought to fortify its world, and the Being, the watcher, the *High Mind* that was there in the beginning and who's mandate was and is to learn to wield the God-like powers of creation.

In theory (hopefully), as the complex moves farther and farther along its spiritual path, the higher side (comprised of lasting qualities) becomes "more" and the lesser side (comprised of fleeting wants and desires) diminishes. As this happens, the child becomes more lasting, more "real" in a cosmic sense.

And when that child has so completely embodied lasting qualities to the exclusion of all else, the enlightenment of the Buddhas will come. When that happens, it will be time for that parent self (the original creator) to step away from that child self, allowing that child to exist as a newly minted, independent, immortal entity, distinct from its parent. That is what I think the Master was talking about when he talked about "stepping away from his child." It wasn't a renunciation of the child, it was an acknowl-

edgement that it was time to allow that evolved self to be on its own (even if that self didn't want to leave its parent).

But that's not where it ends. When the time is right within the universe of experience, that evolved child will be given the opportunity to become a parent in its own right in an evolution fitted to its necessity, and it will create a new child-self as did its own parent. That is how God grows, Consciousness creating new Consciousness out of the thought-stuff of itself.

This, by the way, is why my stepping away from the sexual energies is NOT the same as what the Master did when complete enlightenment came.

_____x_____

[And as a small, additional sidenote . . .]

I've been feeling a little uncomfortable about the weakness of my explanation of Consciousness moving from an undifferentiated form to a compartmentalized, seemingly fragmented form, so I've been trying to figure a clever way to explain it more relatably. Finally, the answer came. *You* are the answer (*as above, so below*, and thank you, Hermes Trismegistus). Bear with me (and yes, that's the correct spelling).

Let's say you've spent all your life in the backwoods and have not spent a single day in school. You've decided to come out into the world. To remedy at least one of your educational deficiencies, you send your mind into the world of *science*. You focus thought on physics, and chemistry, and biology, and geology. You do all of this at the same time (in fact, there is no such thing as real multi-tasking . . . when you think you are doing that, all your brain is doing is jumping between tasks really fast . . . but let's pretend you could multi-task and all of these endeavors are happening at the same time).

This is differentiation. You (the Oversoul) are projecting your mind into several areas of experience at the same time.

But that's not where you stop. At some point the part of you that is cogitating on *physics* will move into the world of Classical Newtonian Mechanic, and electricity and magnetism (E&M), and thermodynamics, and optics, and relativity (again, all assumed to be done at the same time).

What you are doing is to further differentiate into more refined aspects of the whole of *physics*.

But that's not (again) where you stop. At some point the part of you that is cogitating on *E&M* will move into the world of electric fields and electric potentials and electric circuits and magnetic fields and induction. What you are doing is to further differentiate into more refined aspects of the whole of *E&M*.

But (again, again) that's not where you stop. At some point the part of you that is cogitating on *magnetism* will move into the world associated with the earth's magnetic field, and how magnetic fields interact with charge in motion, and how magnetic fields are produced, and how to derive magnetic field functions using Ampere's Law and the Law of Biot Savart, and how magnetic fields are harness to create things like motors and generators, and if you are really exotic, how magnetic fields don't really exist with magnetic effects really being *relativistic effects*. What you are doing is to further differentiate into more refined aspects of the whole of *magnetism*.

This is not a perfect analogy, but you can see how there is a kind-of cascading effect as your awareness of science becomes more and more minute. That is what an Oversoul does. It starts out as a whole, undifferentiated Awareness, then with time has aspects of itself move into different levels of experience in matter . . .

. . . And if you are exhausted at this point, take heart. I don't think the Brothers thought this stuff was important enough to stress AT ALL, and the next chapters will be considerably less complex, more biographical and definitely more down to earth . . . sort of. You'll see.

Chapter 27

Musings 13
LOVE

[We've talked about the ins and outs of sex. Now it's time to take a quick look at love. This is going to be speculative short and sweet . . . and possibly surprising.]

There are all sorts of superficial reasons the child-self wants to fall in love. Loneliness ranks way up there for most. Wanting someone to build a life with, to make plans with, to do things with, to have sex with, these are all subsets of that emotion. But the single most powerful, underlying motivation is really quite fine and, as primal as it is, not at all obvious.

According to the Brothers, the very first thought issued forth by the Divine Mind as It *thought the worlds into existence*, the bedrock upon which all from the atom up is based, was the Love the One Self felt for its parts.

In the beginning of this evolution, we as Conscious Beings were (as we still are) a part of that One Self. There was not, at the time, the illusion of separateness between us that exists in our current state. We were a coherent unit, a single organism of sorts that was completely pure in its devotion to what was best for the others of our kind. We were suffused, in other words, in lovingness.

Human relationships get easily muddled. Karma is always acting on some level, and in our apparent, differentiated form our wants and self-defined needs and desires regularly screw things up. But down deep, at the heart of our urging to become one with another human being, there is a very basic, melancholic desire to return to that primal state. We miss, in short, being with our fellows on this very blissful, selfless level.

When a chela takes that last step into full enlightenment, becoming a Bodhisattva, experiencing a *coming into Oneness with All that is,* they say that Nature unfolds Itself in joy and the stars literally sing. It is an

experience beyond bliss. It is a *coming home* in the most profound sense.

When you and I seek to love another, underlying it all, completely out of sight of the child-self, there is a desire to experience a small taste of this *come home*. Once you step beyond all the personal-self motivations, that is where we are really trying to go with *true love*.

Chapter 28

Musings 14
Nature

[With my first full read-through of this book years ago, I noticed I had been guilty of making what I consider to be a serious oversight: I had said practically nothing about *nature*. I inserted this chapter to remedy the lapse. There is something I want to point out first, though. You'll see its relevance toward the end.

One of the things I've found characteristic of humans, myself included, is the tendency to be swayed by preconceived notions. I ran into this in a particularly spectacular way a few years back with some research done by a couple of Harvard *School of Education* PhD's (and their graduate students) concerning physics education.

There had, for years, been complaints coming out of the ranks of university physics professors that students who entered college having taken physics in high school knew how to do the math associated with elementary physics but didn't really understand the physics itself. So being from one of the preeminent universities in the world, these researchers decided to look into that assertion by quantifying it with data. And when they were done, they published their findings.

Their protocol was perfectly reasonable. Using students taking Harvard's first year physics course, they compared final grades of those who had taken an AP physics class in high school with the grades of those who had done *no* physics in high school.

The results? There wasn't much difference between the two groups.

The conclusion? Taking physics in high school was a waste of time. Why? Because, presumably, the instruction being given in high school physics was inferior. Otherwise, students would have reaped positive benefits from the endeavor and would have done better in their college class than their less educated mates . . . which apparently hadn't happened.

None other than "The Wall Street Journal" picked up on the story with, I was told (though I didn't see the actual article), a front-page headline trumpeted the incompetence of high school physics teachers and the

uselessness of taking physics while *in* high school.

I, not surprisingly, saw red when I heard about this, subsequently writing the authors. What I pointed out to those crack research professional was that when a normal, bright students (not someone who was born to be a physicist, but someone who was a good student taking an AP course) runs into physics for the first time, it is rare if everything falls into place and the student comes out the other end feeling comfortable and confident and secure in their physics knowledge. Classes like AP Physics are rapid-fire. There are huge amounts of picky *bits and pieces of information* that, if you don't get firmly under your belt, will stop you cold when trying to analyze problems. As a consequence, it just isn't common for first timers to come out feeling good about their knowledge base.

What *should* happen when a student takes physics for the second time in college, assuming the professor teaching the course is worth a shit, is that all those seemingly random bits and pieces fall into place, the student experiences tons of *ahha* moments, and by the end of the course he or she pretty much has the physics wired . . . this all assuming the professor is worth a tinker's damn.

But if the professor isn't worth beans, then you find an interesting problem. Of course, the first-time students will experience all the whim whams the AP students felt the previous year in high school, coming out of the course in a muddle. But because no enlightenments have come from the professor, the ex-AP students won't be motivated out of the muddle they were in when they left their high school AP class, and the consequence will be that the two groups will end up in pretty much the same place.

In other words, the problem isn't poor teaching at the high school level, it's a gross misunderstanding of the psychology of "normal" kids learning physics for the first time, and *miserable teaching at the university level*.

I received a reply from the Harvard researchers. It said, "Gee, we never thought of that . . . "

Translation: They had been so sure that the complaints of university professors were on target, they took perfectly good data and skewed it to fit what they thought the outcome should be . . . something humans do ALL THE TIME. It's even given a name in today's psychology texts. It's called *confirmation bias*.

As I said, you will see how this tendency plays into this chapter at its end.]

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[Nature reflecting the state of humanity . . .]

Having beat around the bush with that preamble, I'm no longer going to beat around the bush with this chapter. I'm going to simply state what I've learned from the Brothers about nature. Some of what you will be reading is backed up with my personal observations. Some of it is more hearsay than anything else. No matter, it all reflects what I think is going on when it comes to the so-called *natural world*.

In the beginning of this solar evolution, according to the Brothers, before vehicles that could support life had been formed by nature, all of the Awareness that would differentiate and come to animate physical form on this planet resided without form in the inner worlds. With time, this aggregate Consciousness, driven by the karmic necessities that would drive It into existence in matter, worked with nature to evolve vehicles for experience (remember, this could have happened in places within the system other than Earth). With time (on Earth), plant forms were evolved and animated by Consciousnesses whose immersion into matter was "middling" (the world of a plant does not have the psychological components that you and I deal with, which is more appropriate for Consciousnesses being *introduced* to *existence in matter*). The development of animal forms provided Consciousnesses with a deeper immersion, which is to say the possibility of animating forms that were more mobile and that could affect their environment in a more personal way. And the human form was finally developed for the Consciousnesses that were ready to learn to deal with *freedom of will* and the exercising of the creating energies of God through *thought* (I'm pretty clearly simplifying things, but being anal about the technicalities is kind-of counterproductive here, so I'm letting it slide).

There were levels of Consciousness, in other words. It wasn't a one-size-fits-all kind of thing.

_____x_____

[Levels of Consciousness, the Devic Kingdom and nature as a mirror . . .]

Standard, everyday humans are the highest level of Awareness currently evident on this planet. This is *not* to say that they are the highest level of Awareness *on* the planet. There are the Brothers, who are considerably beyond the main stream of humanity and, obviously, not evident, and there are beings that are even beyond them. But as for the general sweep of spiritual evolution, humankind en mass is at the top.

The point is, wherever you are, you are surrounded by Consciousness. Even at the heart of an atom, there resides Awareness.[1] It is not Awareness like the kind you are familiar with, but its very existence as a part of the *Mind of God* means there is some level of Consciousness there.

More to the point, as far as humans go, when you walk in solitude through a forest, you are not alone. There is Consciousness all around you, and I'm not just talking about the animals. The great Awarenesses that animate individual trees and, collectively, whole forests (these are called *devas* in Sanskrit), they suffuse the space through which you walk. These are very benevolent Beings, having not immersed themselves as completely into matter as has humankind (there is not a psychological component to their experience) but having immersed themselves in the ways of service way beyond anything you or I could comprehend. In fact, this planet has two very different evolutions going on side-by-side, the one that leads to humankind and the one that is associated with these *nature spirits*. The latter is referred to as *the devic kingdom*.[2]

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[1] The Brothers were talking about initiations in the Great Pyramid during one of our meetings, and they said that at certain points within a chela's evolution the chela would be sent out of his or her body and into the inner worlds to stand unprotected against the powerful thought-forms that reside there. There were different degrees to which this was done, but when a very high chela successfully negotiated the highest of these initiations, it often took several days after the initiation before the chela could open his or her eyes. Having seen to the heart of this place, the very atomic structure of the walls of the room in which they resided would so glow with the intense light of pure Consciousness that it would be blinding to the chela until he or she could learn to compensate for it.

[2] The Brothers also talked about the Consciousnesses that animate *form*. These they collectively referred to as the *elemental kingdom*. Fire was a part of this realm. Also, it is interesting that when asked about the atom and its primal constituents, they told our group in the early 1970s that at a level science would never be able to go, matter was made up of *geometric forms that vibrate*. Although this wasn't something Kay knew about at the time (the Brothers were talking about ancient knowledge and were not commenting on current scientific theory), this was right around the time the world of modern physics was first considering the possibilities of *String Theory*. That theory, interestingly, posits that the "real" elementary constituents of matter are super,

As things are set up, the Beings on the human fork that have reached the human stage act as teachers to the Consciousness that are on that path but have not yet immersed themselves so fully into matter (these would primarily include the animal forms). In return, nature as a whole (the devic kingdom included) upholds humankind.

THE ONE THING I WANT TO MAKE CLEAR, whether anything I've said above makes sense to you or not, is that part of nature's task is to support humankind's effort to learn to deal with existence in matter *by reflecting back at humanity the state of humanity*.

As long as there are humans who are venomous in their dealings with other humans (not to mention life in general), there will be venomous creatures in nature reflecting back to humanity that state of being.

As long as there are humans who use subterfuge in their dealings with other human beings (not to mention life in general), there will be creatures in nature that use subterfuge to get by.

As long as there are humans who act gently and kindly in their dealings with other human beings (not to mention life in general), there will be creatures in nature that are kindly and gentle in their nature.

As long as there are humans who storm through life, mindlessly tearing up the emotional landscape of all around them, there will be tornados and hurricanes in nature reflecting back to humanity that state of humanity.

What the Brothers have said is that nature is a perfect, reflecting mirror for the state of mankind. That is part of its job. That is why Beings (chelas) who have moved to a point of complete benevolence and compassion and harmlessness need not fear being attacked by animals that are otherwise harmful (there are all sorts of stories of holy men approaching tigers or poisonous snakes and being greeting by those creatures with no harm coming to the individual . . . though we are talking about very highly evolved Beings here and not something you ought to try at home after ten minutes of "being good").

When there is no longer harmfulness in humanity, the metaphoric lion will lay down with the lamb because there will no longer be the necessity for the lion to reflect life as a predator. Nature's task is to reflect back

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super, super, super sub-atomic (as in, at a level science will never be able to go) *vibrating strings of energy* whose eleven-dimensional, vibrational forms define the kind of "particle" they manifest . . . which is pretty much what the Brothers and the tradition from whence they came were saying.

at humanity the state of humanity, and that's exactly what it does.[3] [4]

Soooo, the next time you hear some bright soul saying that humans are justified in doing some selfish act because humans are just animals and that's what animals do in nature, feel free to give him (it's usually a him in these cases) a metaphorical dope-slap up-side the head. Because even though he may have a long line of yahoos standing behind him saying, "Amen, brother," it doesn't mean he doesn't have his head shoved firmly up his ass as he rather nicely executes *confirmational bias* . . .

Nature is the way *it* is because we are the way *we* are, not the other way around. :) [5]

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[3] I do not condone killing in general, and I certainly don't condone the killing of animals for food, but I will kill a mosquito if I get the chance. Although there are certainly people whose personal approach to life is mosquito-like, I'm pretty sure the mosquito itself is a manifestation of the meditations of the *Dark Side*. I once asked the Brothers about how one should approach this. They said that if I was going to kill a mosquito (or any "pest"), I should give the Being that is animating the form a blessing so that upon release with death it might have the opportunity to animate a more benevolent form next time around. In other words, you don't kill indiscriminately when you rid the world of an animal that is dangerous, you take time and thought to send the Being that has been trapped in that form on to a better form.

[4] (This footnote was inserted in 2023.) According to The Story of More, a delightful, fact ladened, cleverly crafted book about *climate change* written by Hope Jahren, there are around 1,000,000 farm animals killed for food in the U.S. *daily*. Iowa, for instance, is home to 22,000,000 hogs. In Austin, Minnesota (Jahren's hometown), located a few miles north of the Iowa border, between Fourth St and Eighth St Northeast, 1300 people help satisfy our nation's pork fix by kill 19,000 hogs DAILY. In total, American meat eaters are responsible for the killing of thirty million cattle, a hundred-and-twenty million pigs and (as the author says) a whopping nine billion chickens every year. In Chapter 7's *footnote 8* I stated that the Brothers once said that we humans owed an enormous karmic debt to *our younger brothers* (which is to say the Beings who animate the forms we call animals). At the time, I had no idea . . . (And for you dedicated meat eaters who argue that plants are living things, too, and eating them is no different than eating animals, think again. The animal kingdom's task is to provide bodies that allow Consciousnesses to meld into matter more deeply than is possible with a plant form. Animals are learning to deal with mobility and the possibility of affecting their environment in a significant way. The plant kingdom is oriented around service and the supporting of the higher kingdoms. It is not for nothing that it takes a single cow a little over nine months to produce a single baby calf. A single ear of corn has, on average, 800 kernels of corn, each of which can produce a whole new corn stalk in eight weeks. Plants are here to support the kingdoms above them, and aside from carrying on oxygen-generating photosynthesis, that includes the providing of food.)

[5] In a footnote in Chapter 23, I said the following: "Sadly, the Brothers told us that these great Beings in the Devic and Elemental kingdoms were being horribly stressed, having to fight harder and harder to continue to hold to form as man moves in the way man is moving. I didn't put two and two together at the time, but since then, watching all the super hurri-

[Note: I really like and respect the sentiment presented above, and I really don't want to distract from it. I have two other things to talk about, though, so I'd like to put a mental spacer between what you've just read and these last thoughts. Take a few minutes now to let things sink in, then move on. Once your cogitating is done, read the footnote that is attached here.[6]]

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[Pandemics . . .]

I haven't had a lot of time to think through what you are about to read, so there may be holes in my thinking. We'll see . . .

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canes and super fires and super tornadoes and super rains, what I think I'm seeing is those Being bending to mankind's necessity." The Brothers were telling us that huge weather dislocations were coming as a consequence of the way humankind has treated the earth. The outward manifestations of global warming weren't yet evident when they said what they said, so the import of their words didn't really register with me at the time, but it was one more example of their letting us in on "stuff" that was happening (even though I didn't recognize it as such) underneath the surface.

A little more about hurricanes and rainstorms: In 2024, a Category 4 hurricane named Helene, with 140 mph winds and an initial 15 foot storm surge, passed through seven states (Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and Kentucky). Ignoring the damage done by its winds, its rain dumped 5,300,000,000,000 cubic feet of water (that's 5.3 trillion) over a three-day period. 5.3 trillion cubic feet of water is the equivalent of 39.6 trillion gallons, enough water to fill the Dallas Cowboy Stadium to the brim 51,000 times. It washed out roads and bridges and completely isolating out-of-the-way mountain communities for days (this included Ashford, North Carolina, a pristine area of the Blue Ridge Mountains that has long been acknowledged as *a climate haven*—except, apparently, no more). Research suggests that the most damaging of U.S. hurricanes from the Atlantic have DOUBLED since 1980 (a hundred years ago, the U.S. experienced 1 or 2 major hurricanes per year—according to NOAA, the U.S. can expect 4 to 7 major hurricanes in 2024). Clearly, shit is happening . . . (in fact, lots more shit—Milton, a Category 3 hurricane, hit Florida two weeks after Helene with 125 mph winds—it spawned 27 tornadoes in the state and left 2.5 million people without power).

6 I presume this is obvious, but if this is true (and I believe it is), it suggests there are very refined, subtle, well-tuned connections between the natural world and the state of humankind en mass. It also suggests similarly fine-tuned connections between nature and individuals, and between individuals and individuals. Looking at this more closely, dealing with people in your world is kind of a minefield in the sense that everyone you have contact with has a passel of karmic knots and necessities, and every time you open your mouth or make a move, you rub up against them. The karmic weave that exists between people is amazing (remember, the Brothers said that if you suddenly came into full enlightenment, the relationships you have with others would change to the point of being unrecognizable).

Although I don't ever remember hearing a modern, fundamentalist Christian preacher concluding that a hurricane that had just, say, devastated Louisiana, or a tornado that had just flattened a part of North Carolina . . . both Bible belt states . . . was the consequence of God's wrath being visited upon the wicked, I do distinctly remember back in the mid-1980s fundamentalist Christian preachers congratulating God for having visited the AIDS epidemic on the homosexual community as a punishment for what was claimed to be "that community's unholy sexual practices." Interesting, the compartmentalization.

Having noted that, there *is* a difference between making an observation and making a judgement from that observation. For instance:

Observation 1: In a cosmic sense, sex has one primary purpose—it's a mechanism designed to create a body through which a Being might experience.

Observation 2: In a spiritual sense, the random, promiscuous exercising of that prerogative is not something people should be doing, either hetero or homo . . . (but on the homo side, I'm thinking, maybe, San Francisco bath houses?).

Observation 3: If you know anything about how karma works, you'd expect nature and karma would let people "in" on the above-mentioned observation sooner or later.

Observation 4: As *pointed a statement* as AIDS was to the highlighting of Observation 2 about sexual practices, it wasn't a punishment. And although it did get its start in the gay community, the fact that it jumped to the heterosexual community rather suggests it wasn't meant solely for queers (as our erstwhile, arrogant, ignorant, sanctimonious, self-righteous preachers wanted to suggest . . . and yes, this parenthetical thought is a good example of a judgement).[7]

My point is that although the generating of a disease is one of many ways karma and nature can act to make manifest not-so-good thought-forms that humankind has embraced, it isn't the only possibility and it isn't a punishment . . . it's just one of the many tools *the Law* has in its never ending quest to nudge humankind into enlightenment, into an understanding of what it means to be a fully evolved human being.[8]

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[7] I always found it amusing that "God" had long since figured out other ways to let the heterosexual population know that their treatment of sex wasn't exactly pristine—I give you the unexpected, unwanted, unplanned, socially embarrassing, life shattering, surprise (or illegitimate) pregnancy. This, not to mention syphilis, gonorrhea, herpes and crabs.

[8] I'm pretty sure I mentioned this before, but if I didn't: The Brothers often referred to the

That said, it's May 28, 2020. At this point, over 5,000,000 humans are known to have been infected by the *novel covid-19 virus* with over 100,000 having died in America alone. A third of the world's population has been enduring "lockdown" for the last few months, and in America, that lockdown has caused job-loss for over 40,000,000 individuals, complete with loss of health care insurance. If you include all the dependents connected to those millions, it means that somewhere around a quarter of the country has no source of income and, with little in the way of a rainy-day backstop, faces the prospect of insurmountable future debt. What's more, there is food insecurity—at one point, 10,000 cars lined up in San Antonio, Texas, for a hand-out of food at a San Antonio Food Bank (those are cars lined up in the photo), all of which brings to mind the question, "What massive, human-fed, inner-world thought-form has engendered the necessity for nature and karma to uncork the *novel covid-19 virus* pandemic that I am currently having the pleasure of experiencing, complete with social-distancing and the necessity to distance-teach?"

San Antonio Express-News

There's still good on Good Friday

Food lines are so long 'it just breaks your heart'

Golfers can stroll links at a social distance

10,000 households are helped during massive distribution

I guess the first thing to note is that the collective karma required to bring an entire planet to a standstill must be staggering, so identifying one thing probably isn't going to do the job. Besides, karma isn't generally linear. But there is always a connection between the *quality* of a tipping-point thought-form and the characteristics of its manifestation.

So consider: A virus is a critter that is just trying to do the best it can for itself. It uses the mechanisms embodied in the cellular structure of the animal it has infected to reproduce itself, then sends its clones out into the organism to continue the cycle as the infection grows outward from small to large. And though it doesn't start out with the intension of killing its host, it can do that in its fervor for personal survival. It is kind of a poster child for *the selfish actor*.

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karmic law as just *the law.*

[Predominate thought-forms of the time . . .]

If you could dissociate yourself from *the times* and *the social scene* and *the politics of this era*, what is the *tone* of the thought-forms that seem to be proliferating at this point in time?

On the positive side, you would surely sense people trying very hard to make life good for others. On the not so positive side, you would undoubtedly notice a very strong trend toward nationalistic populism pervading the planet. Examples of the latter:

We have a President who has openly stated that American comes first, even if that means heartlessly separating children from their parents at the Mexican border.

With the specter of global warming looming mightily, Brazil, with the largest rainforest in the world (and, as a consequence, one of the largest natural carbon-sequestering mechanism on the planet) is now led by elected President Jair Bolsonaro, a climate-change denier who is more interested in commerce and profit than the consequences of mass-deforestation. To further that end, he has encouraged the clear-cutting of upwards of 80,000 acres of rainforest *a day* (this, while significantly degrading an additional 560,000 acres every week).

We have a leader in India who has thought nothing of disenfranchising 180,000,000 Indian Muslim in an attempt to make India a Hindu nation because, well, he's Hindu.

We have leaders in European Union countries effectively ignoring the horrors that have motivate hundreds of thousands of families to flee places like Syria by denying those terrified asylum-seekers the safety of shelter in their own country.

And we have nationalist parties all across Europe (not to mention the early iterations of Putin in Russia and Peng in China) gaining politically sway, powered by the sentiment "me, me, me."

Of course, in all of these cases, if people hadn't embraced the thought-forms of self-interest in the first place, these leaders would never have found traction. Additionally, it certainly isn't the first time in our history that humans have acted selfishly. But the amalgam of thought that has bubbled forth now has given us a time when the politics of the personal-self seems to be carrying the day. And it's interesting how it has taken hold.

With the *Dark Side's* support, these very bad actors have injected themselves into the body politic, have used the mechanisms of the state to

project and amplify their message of self-preferment, and like a virus, that DNA has further infected mind after mind after mind.

This is the Kali Yuga, the Age of Iron, the time of choosing. There are myriad ways karma might react to this mindset, but a very natural way would be to animate a virus that acts on the human body in exactly the same way a political message of blind self-interest acts on the mental state of the otherwise self-involved.

In short, I am not at all surprised that we have a massive viral outbreak on our hands. Remembering that *nature reflects the state of mankind*, what a splendid mirror nature has brought us in this virus, complete with all the havoc that the exercising of the thought-form of self-preferment brings . . .

P.S. And for those of you who think, "Oh, but what about the innocents amongst us?" My response is that everyone has his or her karmic past and there are no innocents.[9] What's more, living in a time like this affords enormous opportunities, not only to adjust karmic imbalances but also to act in ways that are good and noble. Even dying at the hands of the virus is not necessarily a bad thing as the very nature of death is a kind of illusion.

But don't think I'm feeling smug about this. The Brothers told me that I had lived a very short life that ended in death at the hands of the black plague. I've often wondered if I might not go out via a plague this time around. Until now, that was just ludicrous speculation. After all, when was I ever going to come into contact with something like a real, live plague (hee hee)?

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[On a lighter note . . . some of my run-ins with nature.]

One of the very cool perks that came with working at Polytechnic School was the opportunity to participate as a chaperone in "class trips," outdoor education adventures for the students that lasted anywhere from four to seven days. This part of the Poly experience was put in place considerably before I arrived. Nevertheless, I chaperoned something like *ninety* of these trips over the 46 years I taught there.

Examples: When I first arrived at Poly, the senior trip was a back-

[9] This is not to say I wouldn't help out anyone and everyone I could in their efforts to survive.

packing affair. The consequence was that I had the chance to backpack through the Southern Sierras, through the mountains above Death Valley, through the mountains that run through the middle of Baja California and through the back country of Zion National Park.[10] I traveled into the middle of Mexico to camp in the largest Aspen grove in the Americas.[11] I've snow-shoed in Yosemite; I've backpacked in the backcountry of Big Sur. I've river rafted with the juniors on both the Green River in Utah[12] and, later, on the Klamath River on the border between Oregon and California. With later Senior trips going to the Kern River, I've both whitewater *rafted* and whitewater *kayaked* on the Kern.[13] I've mountain biked in the Sedona, Arizona area, and also in the Mammoth Mountain area. I've surfed at a Southern California beach whose name escapes me. I've sailed a tall ship from Newport Beach to Catalina and the Channel Islands. I've *sea kayaked* around the Channel Islands. I've rock climbed in Joshua Tree National Park. I learned to windsail on Lake Isabella near Kernville. I've engaged in community service in the Santa Barbara area. In all of these experiences, I've had the opportunity to be in nature, and I've taken advantage of that opportunity to the fullest.

Aside from the occasional hike to the falls above Eaton Canyon (about four miles directly north of where I live), I have only done a few things that have been nature-involving on my own. There is a circle of trees in the Eaton Canyon area our group used to visit regularly. The Devic presences there were quite strong. I took a car trip through Canada one year, ending in Glacier National Park where I was able to stay in all four of the lodges in the park.[14] I went to Carlsbad Caverns with my dad one summer.[15]

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[10] While in Zion, we camped in a creek bed during a light rainstorm (a dubious choice, but that is where the guides put us), and when we got up the next morning there was a dusting of snow on the ground and icicles hanging from the trees. It was a winter wonderland.

[11] The last three hours of the drive down was on washboard.

[12] Before people were worried about conservation, we had the entire junior class floating down the Green River in one giant pod. It was wild (and the mud fights were epic).

[13] Sierra South is the outfitter we've used for years on the Kern River (and other trips). I learned how to whitewater kayak on our very first senior trip with them. Sierra South's owner is Tom Moore, a great guy and someone I consider a friend.

[14] At one of the lodges, I took a day-hike to a glacier that required an elevation change of over 5000 feet (right around a mile up). I had to run most of the way down to make it back before sunset.

[15] Carlsbad Caves in New Mexico is the Exploratorium of the geologic world. Trekking down a mile long path into the earth with the cave's stalactites and stalagmites lit up is like

My preeminent trip, though, was to see Grizzly bears in Alaska in the early 1990's. There is a place called McNeil Falls on Alaska's southern coast that, when the salmon are running, has the largest population of Grizzly bears in the U.S. Every summer, the Park Service holds a lottery in which a select number of people (ten per group) are allowed to visit for a four-day stint. Because most people want to go when the bears are most likely to be there, the Park Service provides statistics about the previous year's lottery (that is, how many people applied for which four-day time, the implication being that the times that had the most applicants were the most probably salmon run times). I didn't want to go the first year, so I applied for the most populated time, the one that had the least chance of success (I think they had something like 4000 applicants the year before for the time slot I went for). I did that because I had a lot going on that summer, didn't really have *time* to go and just wanted the Park Service to send me an application for the next year (they did that for those who missed out). You could have knocked me over with a feather when the email (or was it a letter?) arrived saying I'd made the cut.

To get to McNeil Falls, you have to fly in to Anchorage, then take a car south to the coast, then take a float plane to the area where the falls are. Although there is a little house that the Ranger lives in where you can store your food, it is a camping affair—you have to bring a tent in which to sleep (see photo). It was cold and blustery (even during the summer), and you needed to bring thigh-high wading boots because you had to hike a mile to get to the falls, and you had to ford an inlet during the hike which, depending upon the time of day and state of the tides, was either full of water or not so much (photo to the right).

The falls were more of a cascade

walking into a veritable wonderland. If you ever get a chance to see it, do. Also, if you go, stay till dusk to see the bats, all million-and-a-half of them, swirl up and out of the caves like a tornado to go feed at the river that is a few miles away. Better yet, go back at sunrise the next day to see them return. They fly over the entrance, then pull in their wings and plummet to within a few feet of the cave's floor before pulling out. The sound they make collectively (phit, phit, phit) as they freefall passed you into the entrance is quite a treat.

than anything. The area around the falls was a flat plateau, maybe twenty feet above river level (see photo). When you'd get there, you'd walk down a short pathway to a gravel pad. That is where half of the people would stand in a group for half of the day. The other half would stand on the lower pad which was just slightly above water level. There were steps down to the lower pad which, interestingly, the bears felt perfectly comfortable using for themselves (when a bear would catch a fish, he/she would have to be careful a bigger bear didn't take it away—the way most of the bears protected their catch was to scamper up onto the plateau to eat it away from possible usurpers—the stair was one way to get up to the plateau—the photo is of the Ranger taking a nap with a bear passing by to use the stairs).

The Ranger carried a gun, but it was small caliber and we were pretty sure he'd be more likely to shoot one of us than one of his bears. In any case, the first day I was there I counted 35 Grizzly bears; on the second day I saw 45 bears (look closely at the photo below and you should be able to count 37 bear), on the third day I counted 55 bears and on the last day I didn't bother to count. The whole experience was, on the whole, mind blowing.

I have included three panoramic views with the first being on the previous page.

To the right is a photo of bears on the hill across from the pad.

This is an interesting shot. Note the proximity of the bear to the man on the pad.

This bear passed by the pad where we were stationed. He wasn't more than ten feet away.

Here we have a bear lunging for a salmon.

Dudes hanging out.

At water's edge (this bear was about twenty feet from the lower pad where I was standing).

More good-old-boys, just sitting, waiting.

A confrontations . . . notice the teeth.

Another confrontation . . .

Bingo! A bear munching on a nice salmon (note the tail).

Cubs and Mother bears

Chapter 29

Musings 15
More About Perspective

This is just a series of observation based on perspective. Each will, as usual, be set up with a bracketed statement.

[Poly recently spent a day to celebrate cultural, racial, religious and sexual diversity. As was the case with many of the teachers, I gave a workshop during that day. My workshop was wrapped around the question, "What would your world look like if you viewed it from an eastern perspective?" What is motivating me to write this section is some of the thinking I did in putting that workshop together.]

A story:

It had to be done.

I had to cross the stretch.

I had heard from my mother about this place of death, an enormous, black expanse upon which traveled monsters of incredible size and strength and disregard for the likes of someone as insignificant as myself.

So I went. I found myself looking out over the stretch as the sun was setting. The ground before me was covered with blackness. I knew that several of my relatives and ancestors had been killed here. I just sat there looking, terrified.

Several hours passed. There seemed to be no sign of the monsters. I was beginning to feel that maybe I had a chance. Then, as I watched from the small patch of green that sheltered my presence, I heard a sound in the distance and felt the ground began to tremble under my feet. I looked in the direction of the noise and saw it, an enormous creature with huge, round, lighted eyes. It was approaching fast. It was coming for me.

If I could just get across the blackened land, my mother had told me, I would be safe. Maybe I should run. The noise from the creature was edging toward deafening. It took all the courage I could muster, but I got to my feet and began to sprint for all I was worth.

But I wasn't fast enough. The great creature was upon me in seconds, the light from its eyes piercing through the darkness. And with the incredible volume of sound its body produced, I just stopped. I was paralyzing.

I couldn't move. I just watched it come. I was frozen.

To my surprise, that was what saved me. When it reached me, it simply moved over me, completely covering me for just a moment, then passed on.

I was still alive. It hadn't eaten me. It hadn't crushed me.

I, a mere field mouse, would make it across the highway.

This was the story I started with in the Diversity Day workshop I presented to Poly students in 2009.[1] I used the vignette to drive home a point. How we make sense of our world is built squarely upon underlying assumptions the existence of which are so basic to our thinking that we are often unaware that they even exist. For me, when I first read the story in *Polygraph*, it never passed through my mind until the end that the story was about anything *other* than the travails of another human being . . . yet the story made so much more sense once I found that I was being asked to look through the eyes of a mouse.

So in life, what *are* my underlying assumptions, and how and when (to my horror) do they come burbling up. As I'm not exactly a normal Westerner, it's not a bad question. Briefly, a listing of at least a few of them are:

*I'm very grateful for all the effort nature has put into providing me with a body, but what is "me" is not that body.

Corollary 1: Death is not something I worry much about.

[1] In fact, the original story was written by a Poly senior in the 1980's. I read it, as I remember, in *Polygraph*—a literary magazine that Poly kids were publishing when I first arrived at the school. I don't remember the year or the student, and even though I spent a good hour in our library basement looking through old Polygraphs trying to find the piece, I could not for the life of me unearth it or the author's name. Out of desperation, I recreated it as best I could out of my own head. If you are the author, my apologies for not giving you the credit you deserve. It's a very clever story.

Corollary to Corollary 1: I have to be very careful when I'm around people who have had loved ones die recently because I don't see death as a terrible thing (though I do understand the ripping that happens to a personal-self when someone you love leaves you in death).[2]

*There is often a part of me actively watching me move through the day, almost like an audience member of a play. That means that at least occasionally, I will react to a circumstance unusually.

*When I look at an animal, I see an Awareness, a younger brother, looking back out at me.

*I was born into a Catholic family and attended as a kid a Presbyterian church while living in San Marino, but down deep I know I could as easily have been born into a Moslem community or a Hindu community or an Evangelical community and not, at the core, been any different than I am right now. (This was a bit of a problem for me even as a kid at school because I never seemed to fit into any one group. It was as though my ability to conform to group-think didn't exist.)

*I know I am not anything special. There have been times when the higher side of my child-self has held sway and I have acted nobly, but there have also been times when the lesser side of my child-self has held sways and I have acted like a selfish ass.

*I am fairly observant.[3] (I suspect the Brothers emphasis on knowing one's self has spills over into how I deal with others.) That is not to say that I am perfect in this respect. There have been plenty of times when I could have been more thoughtful toward others, and there have been times when my observations have led me to jump to conclusions that have been off. But on the whole, my minutely watching myself walk through life has leaking over into my additionally watching others in their walk through life.

*I know at a gut level that karma and life are not here to make me feel good, they are here to help me grow as a spiritually evolving Being. The fact that this is executed with little regard for the wants of my child-self is not, for me, surprising or regrettable, though it is sometimes irritating as hell to my small-self.

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[2] You can't exactly say to the grieving, "What the hell, your deceased loved-one hasn't ceased to be, they just aren't here anymore. Think of it as a vacation . . . you wouldn't begrudge them that, would you?"

[3] Bryan would disagree. In fact, it's a kind of running joke between the two of us. The rub is that he has observed me being inattentive about things I don't deem important enough to be attentive to, which does, in a comical way, have the potential of making one appear *out to lunch*.

What it comes down to is that I have lots of opportunities for being misunderstood, because even in everyday, mundane conversations, there is always the chance I will say something that makes perfect sense to me, given where I'm coming from, but that makes no sense to anyone listening. Life really has been an adventure since I came into contact with the Brothers, and perspective has been everything.

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[Perspective and the problem of discrimination.]

Sometime during 2008, I started watching the "McNeil-Lehrer News Hour." Aside from simply wanting to be aware of what's happening in the world, the attraction resided in the fact that when I was younger, I'd visit my dad in Scottsdale, Arizona, and we would sit and watch that program together every night. I had fond remembrances of doing this. It was, in short, kind of a nostalgia thing. (I mentioned this in an earlier chapter.)

I began watching the show "again" a few years after he died. One evening, the moderator was talking to a very well-educated black gentleman who held some position in the U.S. government. I don't remember what they were talking about, but during the conversation the man made a brief allusion to the fact that there is still racism in the United States (this sounded a bit alarmist at the time, but in light of recent events, boy, was he spot on).

It started me thinking about how different from the norm my tilt is when it comes to thinking about human interactions and things like racism (or sexism, or religious zealotry).

There is a lot going on when I look at a racist (or any form of discrimination), but *at its core* what I see in the instigator is a child-self trying to do the best it can for itself at the expense of others.[4] Whether I have an

[4] This tendency shows itself on all sorts of levels. When I was a kid I noticed that some Jews, when crossed, would accuse the dissenter of being *anti-Semitic*! It didn't matter whether the Jew's position was wrong-headed or selfish, the way they dealt with not being supported was to suggest that the dissenter must have it in for ALL Jews. This was an example of a child-self using whatever tools were available in an attempt to come out on top. On a little different front, just a week or so ago a man named Henry Louis Gates, a black professor at Harvard University who has been called "the most educated black man in America" (and who happens to produce and narrate a PBS show I absolutely love, "Finding

emotional reaction to a particular exhibition of racism or not has a lot to do with how invested I am in the situation I'm looking at. I am generally opposed to anyone gaining elevation by stepping on someone else, but I suspect my objection would be even greater if I was the one being stepped upon. (Translation: I am very grateful karma didn't draw me into a life as a Palestinian living in Jerusalem or the occupied region of Palestine under Jewish rule, or a black man in modern America.)

One of the objections one might have to this view of a racist is that it could be construed as a discounting of the damage done by racism. What I've been talking about hasn't been about *the damage done*. That is more of a "getting into the weeds" kind of thing, hence my including the phrase "at its core" in my commentary. The weeds are important, though.

I heard a very interesting podcast on an NPR show called *On the Media* (this particular podcast was at https://www.wnycstudios.org/story/on-the-media-2018-06-01 that discussed how whites don't really understand the history of racism in the United States, then contrasted how Germany dealt with its Nazi past after WWII to how the U. S. dealt with its racist past after the Civil War. It was striking. After the Civil War, a black in the south who became too wealthy or too prominent or too vocal was lynched, and when his wife complained to the authorities, she was lynched, and when their neighbors complained about that, they were lynched. Slavery was abolished, but racism was systematically institutionalized in the South.[5]

Your Roots"), cried *racism* when a cop was unwilling to take the verbal abuse Mr. Gates was dishing out as the cop was trying to do his job (Gates, it seems, was caught trying to break into a house—it was his own house, but the cop didn't initially know that—Mr. Gates was arrested for "disorderly conduct" when Gates got nasty during the interchange). Mr. Gates did EXACTLY what I would have done if I had found myself in a similar situation. I'd have been indignant beyond belief that the cop didn't take me at my word when I said I owned the house. And Lord knows, there are racist cops out there, so Gates may have been dead on in his pronouncement after-the-fact. But the fact remains that he was pissed and wanted to strike out, so he did what we ALL (at least occasionally) do when pushed. He used what was handy to drive home his dissatisfaction . . . and in this case, it was to claim the cop was racist (to his and the cop's credit, the two apparently got together later and talked things out). More often than not, that is what child-selves do. They use whatever tools they have available in an attempt to come out on top.

5 In another excellent NPR "On the Media" program called "The Scarlett E" which is about the *eviction epidemic* in the United States, the second episode of the four-part series talks about how black families in the early twentieth century were not given the option to take out mortgages for home ownership but, rather, were provided only with the option of contracts. These contracts afforded the signees *no equity* in their property, essentially

You can so clearly see the hand of the *Dark Brothers* here. The thoughtforms of callousness and selfishness and greed and willful ignorance are all present, animated and fortified. But once the Dark Ones provided impetus, all they had to do was step back.

Why? Because the central tenet of the lesser-side of the child-self is an abiding desire to protect and support itself to the exclusion of all else. In most people, the higher-side of the child-self keeps this tendency at least partially in check, but not always . . . and there is always that tendency child-selves have to follow their pack. So once the ball was rolling, it wasn't hard to convince otherwise "normal" Beings as they came into white bodies in antebellum South that blacks were inferior. And if the belief gave one a feeling of superiority and status, well, so much the better.

Sidestepping the work of the *Dark Side* for the moment, the point here is that the seeds of racism reside in the child-self's self-preferment, and its willingness to step on another to advance, support and bolster itself. It is fundamentally no different than the misogynist who bashes women to feel superior just because he thinks he can, or the religious zealot who kills members of other religions (or members of his own if they don't agree with him) to advance his self-perceived *chosenness*, or the gay basher who beats down homosexuals because he feels threatened by them, or the little-minded man who lords his position of power as office manager over his minions.

In all of those cases, what I see when viewed from *an impersonal perspective* (which is altogether different than my shortsighted, personal perspective, where I want to throttle the perpetrators for all the seeming harm they've done) are personal-selves attempting to prop themselves up by stepping down on others . . . actions that the abused-people-of-today might very well animate themselves when their fortunes change and karma puts them in a *shoe on the other foot* position.

Clearly, the historic consequences of slavery and racism are way more devastating than the consequences of the asshole office manager, but from where I'm sitting, these are all examples of child-selves doing what they think will make life better for themselves without regard to how their

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being designed to insure certain failure on the part of the holder. How so? If, after years of faithful payments, a payment was missed, the contract would be deemed broken and the contract owner would have the right to take the house back without the slightest thought of compensation for all of the equity that *should* have been stored up in the home. It was the institutional, governmentally sanctioned draining of wealth from the black and brown population. That episode can be found at https://www.wnycstudios.org/story/on-the-media-40-acres (this is the whole hour—you'll have to scroll through to get to the eviction part).

actions will affect others. What I am seeing at the heart of racism and sexism and gay bashing and all the other exploitive practices we humans have devised over the years, are child-selves that haven't yet learned what it means to be truly human. And that is the norm for a lot of our kind at this point.

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[The previous section presented a quick and dirty view of what I see when a racist presents him or herself to me. It is incomplete as it says nothing about the karma of those who have been oppressed, but that's a whole other chapter. Still, there is more to be said about *this* side of the fence with the musical question being, "How dumb can they be?"]

If their actions are any indication, a lot of people out there clearly don't understand the tenets, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." They also don't understand, "Those who would be first will one day be last" and "As you sow, so shall you reap."

As catchy as these saying are, there is depth here that needs to be plumbed.

One of the more perverse characteristics of people who animate the thinking of a racist or misogynist or religious zealot is that they are often all about institutionalizing their bigotry through laws. The Republican Right with its anti-abortion laws; the Jim Crow south with its voter registration laws (and more); those who fought against *equal pay for equal work* laws for women; the Moslem Brotherhood trying to turn Egypt into an Islamist state. In each case you have self-involved souls trying to force their views down the throats of everyone else.

But what is kind of funny, at least if you step back and look at the situations in a cosmic sense, is that if the Brother are right, nobody in their right mind would EVER move to pass laws or creates traditions that would support discrimination against anyone, be they blacks or women or gays or seculars.

Why? Because if reincarnation and karma are a reality, and I fervently believe this to be so, there will surely come a day when I as a man will reincarnate as a woman. There will most probably come a day when I as a white will incarnate as a black or Hispanic or Asian. There will most probably come a day when I as a heterosexual will reincarnate as a

homosexual.[6]

It's all about perspective, because who in their right mind would want to make life hard for a class of people that they knew they would, in all likelihood, someday join?[7]

"Do unto others . . ." . . . there's depth here . . . and next chapter will throw still another, new tint onto the subject.

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[6] In fact, wanting to talk about homosexuality was the reason I put the workshop on at Poly. The whole idea behind that particular "diversity day" was to allow students to see the world from a different perspective. The east's view of existence lends itself to a very real, powerfully, logical explanation of why a Being might come into, say, a male body while having a strong feeling that they should, in fact, really be in a female body (a good explanation doesn't, in my opinion, really exist in the perspective embraced by the western world). That was where I went with the "perspective" discussion during that diversity workshop at Poly.

[7] I should probably inject a small point of order here, something I first mentioned a few chapters back. This is not to imply that if someone is currently having troubles, it means they have done something untoward in a past life or earlier in this life. There are as many reasons for an individual to be drawn into a particular, uncomfortable experience as there are individuals. You don't know where people have been. For all you know, that down and out soul you find on the street corner may be a chela who is simply experiencing a testing life. They should be treated with the same respect you would treat anybody else. The point is that the only individual you have real insight into is yourself (assuming you are willing and able to look). You don't want to be naive when it comes to others individuals, but on the other hand you don't want to fall into the trap of jumping to conclusions about others simply by looking at their circumstance.

Chapter 30

Musings 16
I Give You 2015 to 2022, and the Kali Yuga

[From the Brothers: "A chela lives in the world, but is not of the world." I'm not a chela (how many times have I said that?), but I've tried to *live the life* as best I can. That means I try very hard to look at the world in the same way I look at my body: I do the best I can for it, but I know it's not me—it is the clothing I've been entrusted to wear as I learn through experience about this place.

I fail to remember this sometimes, especially when emotions associated with being human come into play (OK, it happens more often than not), but knowledge of what this place is all about is usually there, whispering in my ear. For all my faults, it has been a fairly unyielding part of my mindset since the Brothers . . . kind of like background noise.

The Brothers occasionally veered away from a focus on what each of the members of our group might consider as we moved along our spiritual paths, and looked more broadly at our times. Some of what they said follows, and what follows *that* are some observations from me.]

This is the Kali Yuga, the Age of Iron, the heaviest of times as far as thought-forms and *immersion into matter* goes, and the most intense period of human spiritual evolution on this planet. Most people have had periods during their incarnations when they have acted nobly coupled with occasions when they have acted primarily on behalf of themselves with little regard for others. These basically good but flawed individuals will move into the upward swing of evolution as humanity arcs up and out of the Kali Yuga toward its higher potential, having built enough of lasting worth within themselves to be allowed to do so.

On the flip side, there are those whose actions over many lifetimes have primarily been self-involved. These are the Beings who are on the edge, who may *not* be going on but rather may be going into the deep sleep

(Avici?) that awaits those who have not built into themselves enough of lasting quality. The Kali Yuga is their time of choosing. It is their last chance to take actions that will allow them to continue on with the rest of humankind into that upward swing.

Because the Kali Yuga is a period of choice, the Brothers told us that the "powers of goodness" and the "powers of evil" are perfectly balanced now. And because choice is so important, actions that are *suffused in light* and actions that are *clouded in darkness* are made vividly evident by the natural Karmic Law. When choice comes, in other words, what is "right" in a spiritual sense and what is "wrong" in a spiritual sense is made screamingly obvious to both decision-makers and bystanders. All one has to do is look.

When I first wrote this chapter, I was moved to talk about individuals and institutions that were pretty clearly moving along the path to darkness. I am still going to address some of those situations, but first I want to mention a few whose actions appear to be suffused in light. The doctors who participate in *Doctors Without Borders*, who freely give of their time and skill to help people in poor countries; the celebrity chef Jose Andres whose mobile kitchen has gone to disaster areas over the last ten years to provide meals to people left homeless by hurricanes and earthquakes (he has provided over 70,000,000 free meals since he began doing this); Bill Strickland, who created Manchester Bidwell as a "private school for the poor"[1]; the pastor William Barber and his *Poor People's Campaign*;[2] the mothers involved in *Mothers Against Senseless Shootings* who camped out during the summer of 2015 at 75th and Stewart, a dangerous intersection in South-Side Chicago, to prevent "another" shooting at that location; activists who fight for education for girls in countries where female education is not a cultural norm; individuals who run food banks; Jimmy Carter's participation in *Habitat for Humanity*, which helps people build or improve "a

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1 I heard about him on the PBS NewsHour. The school trains the poor to become bakers, chefs, chemical lab techs, pharmacist techs and horticulturists. The quote I really liked from him was, "Flood the place with sunlight, given them gourmet meals, world class art and Herbie Handcock's music and you can heal *cancer of the spirit*."

2 In a June 1, 2017 *New Yorker Radio Hour* podcast (Episode 85), he said, speaking to the modern, evangelical church-support of then President Trump and trying to pull people back to the real message of Christ, "If your attention is *not* on dealing with the issues that hurt the poor, the broken hearted, the sick, the left out, the least of these, the stranger and all of those who are made to feel unacceptable (which is to say, all those who *Christ* attended to), you don't have white, right-wing evangelicalism, you have heresy, you had theological malpractice."

place where they can call home" (since 1990, that organization has built, renovated or repaired over 1300 homes locally and worldwide); the translating of the New Testament from an American Indian perspective (this was done by the *First Nations Version Translation Council*, spearheaded by Terry Wildman);[3] Kenyan born Andrew Youn and John Gachunga who, in 2006, started *One Acre Fund*, an organization devoted to helping poor African farmers (1.4 million of them to date) grow and sell "more crops;" the parent or grandparent in a food-insecure family who forgoes a meal so their child will have more to eat; Father Greg Boyle, pastor in the most gang ridden parish of Los Angeles County, who realized that the only way to save gangbangers was to treat them like human being, starting Homeboy Industries to give gang members who wanted to change a chance to do just that; all the good folks who are, in good faith, ardently trying to come up with solutions to our rather profound global warming problem; and literally anyone who sees a need and acts to be of help in both big and small ways (doing the proverbial "good deed")[4] . . . these are just a tiny few examples of groups or individuals who are doing things that are benevo-

[3] This translation, called *First Nations Version—An Indigenous Translation of the New Testament*, is a wonder. Consider the section titled "Blessings of the Good Road," which was their translation of what the European church translated as "the Beatitudes": Matthew 5.5 "Creator's blessing rests on the ones who walk softly and in a humble manner. The earth, land and sky will welcome them and always be their home." At least part of what is so remarkable about this is that it acknowledges the Being that animates our planet. It makes walking "softly and humbly" a true blessing. The European translation of the same section, "The meek shall inherit the earth," makes the followers of that path sound like wimps. And as an aside, I heard Mr. Wildman (great name) talk on NPR one day, and he pointed out some interesting things. For instance, they don't use the word *sin* in their translation. The reason for this is because the Greek word found in scriptures that had been translated by Europeans as "sin" is better translated as "misses the mark." Think about it. The idea of *sin* is such a big deal in European Christian thinking. Man is a *sinner* (wawawa). The word holds so much baggage. But if the original meaning was really supposed to model a Being who has "missed the mark," it isn't so damning. It is a Being that just hasn't yet gotten it right. Again, interesting . . .

[4] Another example: In January of 2018, a mud/boulder/debris flow in the Montecito area of Santa Barbara County killed 23, injured 150, completely destroyed 100 homes and left an additional 400 homes filled with four feet of mud. Insurance companies ducked the disaster claiming it was "an act of God," so an army of caring neighbors worked day and night to dig out the homes, to clear and restore open spaces, to restore old trails and to create new ones. The goal was simply to help their neighbors. (This is similar to the efforts of many in the southern states after a tornado or hurricane hits.) From that effort emerged *the Santa Barbara Bucket Brigade* (I chaperoned a five-day long Outdoor Education trip to do community service work in the Santa Barbara/Montecito area with them). It is another example of people seeing a problem and selflessly acting to fix it.

lent and *suffice in light*. Characteristic of them all is the taking of a chaotic situation and making it into something better.[5]

The problem (or reality) is that although there are Beings right now who are moving in that direction, there are many who are not. That is what most of this chapter is about.

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[A bit of confusion about *the deep sleep* and *Avici* (pronounced *aveechee)*]

When Adolf Hitler died, that pathetic excuse for a human Being undoubtedly went into Avici, the deep sleep. Part of what's interesting is that what the Brothers told us about Avici does not align with what the Internet and, apparently, Theosophical lore has to say about it. And to make matters worse, what I remember about *the deep sleep* differs from what Cathy remembers about it.

I thought the Brothers said *the deep sleep* and Avici were the same thing (that's how I've presented the two above). My understanding was that if nature (karma, the One Self, the universe . . . God) could find nothing within the self worth keeping, It would strip that Being of all it had accumulated over all of its incarnations. This would be a complete disintegration of the evolved self, a requiring of the primal-self to start over again at the bottom of the kingdoms as a pure, unevolved Being. But first, the Being would be sent into a limbo of sorts—a deep sleep—to await another sweep of evolution through which it might begin again to evolve.

This is the deepest of the hells, not because it is meant to torment but because it means the Being (not to mention the evolution to which it was attached) loses so much in the way of effort and time, and because the Being finds itself completely isolated and alone for that immense period

[5] This is getting considerably ahead of the story, but on October 6, 2025, Tonya Mosley, host of *Fresh Air*, interviewed Ada Limon, 24th *Poet Laureate of the United States*. Although you can never really know what is going on underneath the surface, she carried a tone about her that made me think about what it might be like to be a chela unaware in today's world. In the middle of her poem Startlement, she wrote, "If you sit by a riverside, you see a culmination of all things upstream. We know now we were never at the circle's center. Instead, all around us, something is living or trying to live." A little later in the interview, when asked about "our times," she said that with all the violence and horror (she is Latina in Trump's world à la 2025), "we can't lose our tenderness, we can't lose our softness . . . it is important to remind people to love." Wonderful words in poem, but what really caught my attention was the tone. Quite remarkable.

of time (the aloneness is evidently excruciating, hence the hell-like status).

Cathy had a different take on this. She said, "I think there are two different states involved. My understanding is that Avici is the complete disintegration (and starting over) of the Being, a return to primordial nothingness, where it (the Being that was at the center of "it") would, by the compassion of the universe, have to literally "start from the bottom" and work its way up through the kingdoms until it could be at the level of conscious, soul-infused human again. This would cover vast eons and cycles of time. That would certainly be case for a Hitler and Stalin et al." (This matches so far with what I just said.)

Continuing from Cathy: "But I thought that *the big sleep* was for those not-so-dark souls who had been unable to make enough consistent choices toward growth. Either because they were "newer" souls ("souls" referring to Beings at the human level)[6] or just Beings who were slow to awaken *the light within* due to unintentional or willful ignorance, their presence would be doing harm to the rest of life due to their accrued karmic load. By their continuing reincarnations beyond this midpoint of the earth cycle, they would be dragging down the upward impetus of the ones who were more able to continue spiritually toward higher awareness. Through the compassion of the Law, those who weren't able to proceed in this cycle due to these reasons would have to hang back, going into a kind of benign sleep state to wait for another round to pick them up again so

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[6] I need to expand this idea of "a new soul." The experience of Consciousness at the animal level is not the experience of Consciousness at the human level. The former is not as deeply immersed in matter as is the latter. How so? An Awareness in a body at the human level needs to believe itself an entity unto itself (that is, it needs to be shielded from its connection to the Whole) so that it can learn to deal with the *creative energies of God* (that is what human thought is all about—it echoes the power that the Divine Mind used when It *thought the worlds into existence*—in fact, people have no conception of the power that exists in a focused human mind) and the associated *freedom of will* that must come with that power (in fact, I'm fairly sure this is what the authors of the Bible meant when they said that *man is made in God's image*). As a consequence, humans have, along with the instincts that come with the animal body they sport, a psychological world they have built within themselves (literally a universe within). Animals run on instinct with only rudimentary "thinking" at their disposal. When Consciousness experiencing at the animal level is ready to transition to the human level, it is like passing through a door (this is a one-way trip—the Hindu belief that if you've been bad, you'll reincarnate as something lesser, like a cow, makes no sense from this perspective). What the Brothers have said is that because we are where we are in this cycle of spiritual evolution, that doorway has just recently closed. They didn't expand on what the phrase "just recently" meant, but the implication was that there are Beings at the human level who have been at it for a long time (old souls) and Beings who have been at it for much less time ("newer" souls).

they could continue."

(Of the two versions, I suspect that Cathy's is the more accurate.)

This gets into what Theosophists call *the inner rounds* and *the outer rounds,* something I talked about briefly a few chapters ago. Suffice it to say, I could be wrong about my understanding . . . or not. It really doesn't matter on two counts.

First, the Brothers never intended to make us into Theosophical scholars, so if I've messed up some arcane point, I'm fairly certain it isn't going to upset much of anyone who counts. And second, *what is important to note here* is that there is a reckoning that comes from one's past actions, and for those on the edge, the Kali Yuga is the last gasp when it comes to deciding whether one can move up and out of this time in a spiritual sense, or will have to lag back.

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[I give you the years 2015 to 2022 . . .]

I was born in 1948. For almost all my life, the slightest whiff of scandal could scuttle a promising political candidate's career. Then came Donald Trump. The Brothers said that during the Kali Yuga, karma would make it very obvious whether a path of action was *shrouded in darkness* or *suffused in light*. I'm interested in looking at that idea as it played out between 2015 and 2022.

To start, I wrote the following toward the end of Donald Trump's first term of office as President of the United States (this was in the run-up to the Presidential election in 2020):

> Things are happening so fast in the U.S., not to mention the world at large, that I can't really keep up. I mean, completely outrageous things are happening DAILY on all fronts in Trump's administration. What I can say is that there are some colossally selfish (dark?) actors in positions of authority and power, either due to their money or due to having been elected to governmental positions, that are really intensifying the difficulties of living for ordinary people. We have individuals in the U.S. who are trying to make changes to our country's underlying foundations that, if they succeed, will make this a very different kind of place

in which to live.

Although there was stuff happening worldwide (I'll mention a few of these things later), I'm going to start with the U.S. and Trump. My question is, "When he was first running for the Presidency, should it have been obvious to voters that this man's actions were *suffused in light* or *shrouded in darkness*?" Let's see:

He publicly stated as fact that most immigrants from Mexico were drug dealers, criminals and rapists. This bit of rhetoric was highly inflammatory and clearly not true, but it played well to his base so it burbled out of his mouth at a rally as though he was spouting gospel.

He maintained that a Navy pilot who had endured over five years of torture after being captured during the Viet Nam war was not really a war hero at all because real heroes don't get captured (a debatable point, but certainly not a very kindly observation in any case).

Not liking the questions he was being asked by a female news moderator during a debate, he deflected her question by suggesting that she might be on the rag (not exactly his words, but that was the idea).

He belittled through mimicry a physically disabled reporter from the *New York Times* during one of his rallies (no comment necessary).

He chided the physical attractiveness of a female Republican candidate for the presidency (ditto).

He was caught on microphone boasting that, being a celebrity, he could get away with "grabbing women's pussy" (you can imagine how that played with anyone with a mother or pretty sister . . . or ugly sister, for that matter . . . though interestingly, the people who supported him passed it off as nothing more than boyish banter).

He encouraged participants of one of his rallies to physically attack anyone who might heckle him during the rally, going so far as to say he would pay bail for anyone getting into trouble for doing so.

He suggested through innuendo that someone might want to consider assassinating his Democratic rival during the presidential race (this, he said later, was a joke, but it didn't seem so at the time and given the gun culture we have in the U.S. today, it wouldn't have been a very funny joke if it had been).

He was associated with a non-academic "university" (it granted no college credit nor did it confer college degrees) that was investigated for "illegal business practices" (which they were), and suffered two civil law suits for defrauding its students by using misleading marketing practices.

Along that vein, he claimed that a judge's decision to allow one of those civil suits to proceed was proof that the judge, a Mexican-American, must be a racist who hates whites (makes you wonder whether his *Make America Great Again* slogan was really saying *Make American Like It Used To Be, Back When a White Man Could Do Whatever He Wanted Without Being Called Out On It*).

He said he admired Duterte of the Philippines (from 2015 to 2017, Duterte had 12,000 Filipinos summarily executed without a trial for supposed drug possession) and Putin of Russia (no need to list Putin's transgressions—they are legendary).

During his initial run for President, he claimed that the sitting president was not an American citizen, starting the "birther movement" amongst right-wing conspiracy theorists (along with everyday conservatives who just wanted to rag on President Obama), then compounded the boldface prevarication by trying to place the blame for its origin at the doorstep of an opponent, the then Democratic candidate for the presidency.

As a businessman in construction, he was accused of not paying his creditors (essentially stiffing them) when he decided he simply had *paid enough* for their services.[7]

Although he has railed against jobs loss and companies that transfer their production facilities overseas, his line of clothing (ties, etc.) were produced in factories in Asia.

He refused to produce his tax returns for public scrutiny.[8]

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[7] When I was looking into the stories behind this, I Googled "Trump stiffs creditors" and found a *U.S.A. Today* article that talked about the allegation. About five seconds after the article came up, my computer's screen was hijacked and a large window opened up with a sign reading, "We have installed a Trojan Horse on your Mac. To remove the virus, click on the button below." I, of course, did no such thing. Instead, I quit the window, then ran WebRoot, the virus detection software Poly provides teachers on their computers. No virus was found. What passed through my mind after the fact, though, was that given the love affair that seemed to exist between Trump and Russia's Putin, and given that Russian hackers went to such lengths to aid in Trump's candidacy for the presidency, it wouldn't surprise me to find that Russian hackers were putting up defenses against anyone looking into the nefarious dealings of the good Mr. Trump . . . (think about what I had Googled). This may seem a little paranoid, but given all the shit that's been happening lately, not completely outside the realm of possibility.

[8] Aside from proudly crowing that as a billionaire, he *paid* no taxes for the last several years, this was important because there had been serious speculation that much of the money he had used to bail out his failed businesses and construction deals over the decades had come from Russia. If that was the case, it would go a long way toward explaining Trump's apologist rhetoric about Putin (owing money to Russian oligarchs, all of whom are under Putin's thumb, would kind of put a cramp in any US Presidents style when it came to Rus-

He waged a non-stop war against mainstream media, claiming that any news that was critical of him was "fake news."

He waged a non-stop war against the intelligence community, arrogantly claiming he knew more about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan than did the generals.

He got his insights into the world from that beacon of enlightenment (and Right-Wing Conservative propaganda machine) Fox News, ignored the security briefing available to him as a presidential candidate.

When he was running, he suggested early on that if he lost the presidential race it was because the election had been rigged from within.

He accepted the endorsement of David Duke, leader of the Klu Klux Klan, then when confronted about it claimed he didn't know who David Duke was even though there was ample evidence to the contrary.

He accused the father of one of his Republican rivals of being complicit in JFK's assassination (a wild fantasy, but just one more flurry of confusion that caused semi-hysteria on the right and made brief headlines on our not so savvy, moderate news outlets).

He threatened to tear up the diplomatic landscape if elected, saying that he would walk away from the Paris Climate Agreement (this was signed by 196 nations) and the Pacific Trade Alliance (great news for China). He also said he would abrogate the Iran Nuclear deal (a really bad idea as it would give Iran carte blanche to begin making nuclear bombs) and that he wasn't so sure he would stay in NATO.

He threatened to build a wall between the U. S. and Mexico to combat illegal immigration even though the majority of people approaching the Mexican-American border were women and children looking for legitimate asylum (i.e., fleeing the gangs and terror that exist in some South American countries). He also crowed that he would make Mexico *pay* for the wall (which was found with time to be complete bullshit).

He more or less promised a war with North Korea.

And finally (not really, but I'm running out of ink), just about every other sentence out of his mouth throughout the campaign (and, frank, ever since) has been shown by fact-checkers to be either inaccurate or an outright lie . . . and this all happened BEFORE November, 2016 (i.e., the Presidential election that year).

Which brings us to a question: You are an evangelical Christian and don't believe women should have the right to choose when it comes to getting an abortion. A Republican president and Senate might put you in a po-

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sian/US relations).

sition to get Supreme Court candidates placed on the Court who would be amenable to overturning Roe vs Wade. The Republican presidential nominee is the very same Donald Trump whose pre-election actions I outlined above. Do you swallow any sense of self-respect and religious conviction you may have and vote for the dumpster-fire that is Trump, or do you stand on principle and pass on that option (a *never-Trumper*)? If you are at all thoughtful and observant and not completely obsessed with unborn babies, the choice is pretty clearly between a path that is luminous and one that will lead to darkness. Remarkably, the Republican Party and about 40% of the voting public completely ignored the obvious signs concerning the kind of person Donald Trump was and managed to elect him to be the 45th President of the United States.[9] [10] [11]

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[9] This is a little unfair as many pro-Trump voters didn't know about a lot of this, being viewers of Fox News. Still, forced ignorance really isn't a defense.

[10] A word about abortion: Bill Mayer had an interesting take on the mindset of the anti-abortion movement. He said, "They think abortion is murder," to which he added, "It is, and I'm good with that. There are 8 billion people on the planet right now. We don't need any more." (When I was born in 1948 there were around two-and-a-half billion people on the planet, so the world's population is clearly getting out of hand. Then again, this IS the Kali Yuga).

Whether you agree with Mayer's somewhat jarring perspective, many modern-day Christians are absolutely rabid about forcing women to have their babies no matter what. Protecting the fetus is what is all important to them. I think there is an interesting underlying psychology behind this that has gone unnoticed.

Kay had a neighbor years ago, Lily, who tended to treat people horribly but was all about being loving toward animals (God help you if she thought you weren't doing that). It was as though she knew down deep that her behavior toward people wasn't so good, so she compensated in her mind by being extra protective of animals. Given that Southern Baptists and the evangelical movement comes primarily from the south . . . you know, where for hundreds of years white people have treated black people very badly, I think this out-of-proportion obsession with babies in the womb is really their way to compensating in the same way Lily compensated when she was uber protective of animals. This is, of course, a gross over-generalization, but every time I've seen news footage of "right to life" protesters outside some clinic, what's run through my mind is that on the surface, these people seem sane and caring . . . but maybe not so much.

[11] During the first two years of his presidency, Trump showed himself to be exactly what an unbiased observer would expect. Spectacularly thin-skinned, he was more worried about his own personal brand than quite literally anything else. Being ill-educated, he ignored his advisors and depended for his world view and action points on *Fox and Friends*. As stated by one of the commentators on PBS NewsHour, "He is delusional in the sense that he creates his own reality, then states it as fact." On May 4, 2018, Bill Mayer in his comedy news show listed "the ten things you do if you are a dictator." They were: *you are a narcissist who likes to put your name and face on buildings* (Trump does this)*; you appoint family members to positions of power* (Trump has done this)*, your rallies are scary* (Trump's are)*;*

you hate the press (Trump calls them "enemies of the people," just as Stalin did)*; you want to hold missile parades* (Trump has suggested this)*; you use your office for your own financial gain* (Trump's corporation, through his kids, has done this)*; you align with dictators and strong men* (the three leaders Trump has repeatedly expressed admiration for, Kim Jong-un from Korea, Putin from Russia and Mohammad Bin-Salman Al Saud from Saudia Arabia, have all ordered the murder *in a public place* of at least one of their critics)*; you claim minorities are the cause of problems in the country* (Trump has done this, but so have most Republicans, so you really can't blame him for that one)*; you lie freely* (according to the Washington Post, in the first fifteen months of the Trump presidency, Trump made over 3000 false or misleading public statements—note: as of 2020, the number was 17,000)*; and you dress in military costumes* (this was the only one Trump hadn't yet animated, to which Mayer said, "We'll see.").

Trump has demanded that public officials of no less rank than the *Director of the FBI* pledge *personal allegiance* to him. During one televised Cabinet Meeting, he made every single Cabinet member take a few minutes to praise him. He is an open, Neo-Nazi apologist. He has gotten into tweet wars with public citizens. He has proclaimed public policy via tweet, often without any consultation with officials in his own Federal agencies but after having seen something that has upset him on *Fox and Friends* (again, his window to the world). He removed the U.S. as a credible, neutral, negotiating source for Israeli-Palestinian conflict when he moved the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. He has re-tweeted anti-Muslim videos. He has worked to bring back coal mining, ignoring the fact that there are less than 80,000 coal minors in the entire country and coal burning is a major contributor to global warming. He has put people who are wholly unqualified in charge of governmental agencies. He supported for Congress a white, male Republican who, if the tens of women who came forth in the months before his special election in Alabama are to be believed, was a known pedophile. He has continued to beat the *fake news* drum, attempting to weaken the nation's news-collecting agencies by complaining that they are *making shit up* (all of which his base accepts as gospel truth). He has attempted to squash the Special Prosecutor in charge of delving into Russian's meddling into our election process (he really doesn't want people to believe that he won due to the Russians, though they clearly had a hand in turning people against Hillary Clinton). He has mercilessly, publicly vilified and denigrated his Attorney General for having recused himself from overseeing Special Council Muller's Russia investigation. Although he did not break ties with NATO, which he seemed to be hinting at for a while, he did, indeed, pull out of the Paris Agreement (to combat climate change), the Pan-American Trade Agreement (this was the free trade agreement between Mexico and the U.S. and between Canada and the U.S). He also canceled the Iran Nuclear deal. In all of those cases, his stated rationale was that he could make a better deal. In none of those cases did he make a better deal. And as an addendum to this footnote, it is now July, 2018 and *over the past two months* Jeff Sessions, Trumps Attorney General, has executed a policy that has forcibly *separated* upwards of 2400 *children from their mother and/or father and/or guardian* at the Mexican/American border, even in cases where the families had legitimate claims for asylum, apparently in the hopes of discouraging refugees fleeing their gang/crime/war infested countries (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador) from seeking asylum in the United States (as a measure of how evil *this* policy was, no records were kept as to who was separated from whom, or where the children were sent after-the-fact . . . in fact, there were officials who urged that the parental court appearances be delayed so that ICE would have more time to redistribute the children

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[An aside . . .]

The Brothers made an interesting observation about Hitler from which I've extrapolated the following: Hitler was evil in the actions he took, but he wasn't so much an inherently evil man à la one of the Dark Brothers as he was a weak man, a man who had made a long series of deeply selfish choices, a man whose weakness allowed him to be easily overshadowed by the Dark Side.

This oddly Star Wars sounding observation (which was made considerably before any of the Star Wars movies ever came out) was alluding to the fact that as a moral invalid, he was easy prey to those who would swamp him with dark thought-forms and use him in dark ways (though this was all accepted by him willingly as part of his moral decrepitude). It is said that he always had Tibetans in his company. I don't know if this was true, but if it was, I don't doubt that they were dugpas—adepts of the red-hat branch of Buddhism that worship death (and very powerful, dark souls to boot). I talked about this branch of the Dark Brotherhood in the E.Phil book.

In any case, in the 1930's, Germany was a country peopled by indi-

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throughout the country making reunification difficult if not impossible—as of September, 2022, there are still 700 children that were separated in 2018 that still have not be reunited with their parents). His appointees have also gutted environmental protections (at one point, one of them said publicly that "a little bit of radiation is good for you" in an attempt to soften objections to the expansion of nuclear energy production in the country—this, in the off-chance you don't know, is so spectacularly false that it's a wonder the official's nose didn't actually grow a la Pinocchio).

He is, in short, a man whose mindset and policies are mean-spirited, not to mention dangerous to the nation as a democracy and to the world as a living organism.

. . . And as of 2022: All of the above says nothing about his part in encouraging the attempted January 6th insurrection/coup at the capital and his continued (to this day) attempt to subvert America's democracy with the Big Lie (i.e., that he really won the 2020 election and that it was stolen from him by Democrat inspired voter fraud). I add this here because with very few exceptions, Republican lawmakers have backed him on this. No matter their reasons, this is another example of what the Brothers were talking about—choice that has to be made where it is very clear-cut as to what the path to light is (admit that Trump lost and accept the consequences) and what the path to darkness is (support the fantasy that Trump was robbed and continue to reinforce in nearly half the population the idea that democracy has failed and is no longer a viable, working option in our country because the Democrats succeeded in stealing the election from their candidate, the rightful heir).

viduals who had been bowed and humbled after WWI. They were ready for a leader to tell them that they were OK, superior even, and to lead them *back to greatness* (I'm not sure if his slogan was, "Make Germany Great Again," but it could have been). Hitler was the individual who was drawn karmically to lead those people, which he did with that very promise. Unfortunately, his severe shortcomings as a human Being made him easily controlled by the Dark Side (as I've said) and when he died the Dark Side abandoned him leaving him the weak shell that he always was with no option but to enter Avici (the Brothers did say that that was where he ended up).

When I see Trump at his rallies, when I hear reports of his tweets, when he eschews policies that are either inhumane or bound to cause gratuitous chaos, I can see quite clearly the hand of the Dark Side in his actions. And in that, he reminds me very much of the kind of individual Hitler was in the sense that he is a karmic agent who has been drawn into a position of power within his nation due to the shortsightedness and personal insecurities and fears and desires of many within the nation. He is completely self-involved, lives "completely untethered from the truth" (thank you, former FBI Director James Comey), is amoral (the Hollywood Access tapes about "grabbing women's pussy" speaks nicely to that) and is so involved in his own brand that he is almost childlike in his response to life.

The consequence of all of this is that almost everything he does brings uncertainty, chaos, havoc, cruelty and in some cases, out-right destruction (this being the way of the Dark Side). If I were religious, not very thoughtful and a bit hysterical, I'd say he was the perfect candidate for what the Christians identify as the anti-Christ (though he clearly hasn't the power, focus or subtlety one would expect of the Dark Brother who might play that role).[12]

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[12] Ignoring the parenthetical observation made at the end of this section, it's 2024 and given all that's happened over the last several years, I've kind of wondered why someone *hasn't* accused Trump of being the anti-Christ. He seems to have all the qualifications. From Matthew 24:24 and Mark 13:22: Christ said, "For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce great signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." The Charismatic wing of the Christian church claims to have "modern-day prophets" who have prophesized that Trump has been chosen by God to be President again, and to lead the nation "back to being a Christian state." (Can you spell *false prophets*?) And as for leading people astray, Trump managed to talk over 70,000,000 Americans into voting for him in the 2020 election. Given the kind of human being he is, this situation sounds pretty Biblical to me . . .

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[America and failure . . .]

The Brothers once said that the United States would never fall from without but, rather, if it fell at all, would fall from within.[13] They also said that during this time (i.e., during the Kali Yuga) great institutions would fall. Some would argue that the greatest institution in our country today is our democracy. I'm not saying it has yet fallen, but there is certainly a large swath of Americans who wouldn't be upset if it did. Additionally, as I pointed out earlier, the Brothers told Cathy that there would be a time in the near future when people would need to look for *small islands of sanity*, the implication being that the world had gone crazy. Example (not the Brothers, mine): There are 172 members of our current Congress who are *election deniers*, all going along with Trump and his universally discredited claim that the 2020 Presidential election was stolen and he was the rightful winner. I'm sure those Congressmen are supporting that claim because doing so keeps them from being removed from office by a still farther-right candidate when re-election time comes around. Still, thinking that mouthing that sentiment *isn't* going to have a substantial effect on the populace as a whole *is insanity*, and that bit of insanity has led to an enormous number of rank-and-file Republicans *believing* the lie.

In short, our President, his allies and those who have so mindlessly ignored where he is as a human Being (i.e., his base) look to be primed and ready to take on the task of making democracy fail . . . and they are doing it with gusto. Only time will tell how completely they and he will succeed . . .

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[On a slightly different track . . . (this part was written in 2018)]

We are still looking for actions that are either *suffused in light* or *clouded in darkness*. To that end . . .

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (better known as Obamacare) was signed into law on March 23, 2010. It had flaws in it,

[13] Interestingly, Lincoln evidently said something similar, which I guess isn't surprising given he had the thrill of residing over the Civil War.

having been picked at and squabbled over by every special interest group on the planet, and since its inception the Republican party has fought any effort by the Democrats to make changes that would make the law more workable (which is to say, engage in actions that would be *suffused in light*). Instead, in 2014 the Republicans, with control of both the House and Senate, started sending "repeal" bills to Obama, which he dutifully vetoes. In all, they sent over 50 of them.

In 2018, Trump (a Republican) was President and the Republicans held both houses of Congress. With that control, they attempted to "repeal and replace" *The Affordable Care Act*.[14] If their bill had passed, 18,000,000 Americans would have immediately lost their health care benefits.[15] The tax savings passed on to the richest Americans would ultimately have been in the hundreds of billions of dollars (each .1%ers alone would save an average of $197,000 a year). Its main impact, ignoring the talk of eliminating maternity leave for women and the availability of prescription drugs for the poor and subsidies to help coal miners with black lung disease and the funding of drug rehab programs and increasing the cost of insurance for the elderly, would hugely limit Medicaid, the government run health care program for the poor (in fact, it would permanently end enrollment in Medicaid three years after passage, and some bright souls on the Republican side—Freedom Party members from the old Tea Party crowd—at one point demanded that all Medicaid patients be denied Emergency Room services and be required to have a job to get benefits).

When it was time to act on this, the choices seemed pretty obvious. The bill would certainly hurt a lot of people with little or no alternative "replacement" in sight, so how to vote, *suffused in light* or *shrouded in darkness*? In the end, it was three Republican senators who rebelled against the travesty of the bill's final version and the repeal didn't go through.

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[14] Except there was no "replacement" plan. That word was stuck in the title to placate critics, not to suggest a solution to the problems that would arise if repeal really happened.

[15] I watched John Oliver's *Last Week Tonight* show (March 17-24, 2018 edition) a few nights ago. During the show, he showed a short clip of Paul Ryan, Republican and the *Speaker of the House of Representatives* in the U.S. Congress, smirking when a reporter pointed out that his "repeal and replace" bill for Obamacare would, according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, see 24,000,000 American losing their health care coverage over the next ten years. He actually SHRUGGED AND SMIRKED in the face of what was going to be a devastating loss to literally tens of millions of Americans, ON CAMERA.

I believe Oliver pointed out what a giant asshole Ryan was, and I remember silently agreeing. But then it hits me: Ryan was doing nothing more than animating in a very naked way Republican mores.

Except the Republicans weren't done.

Several months later, the Republican side of the House and Senate did get together to pass a so-called "tax reform" bill that would drop the tax rate for corporations from 35% to a permanent 21% (this, apparently, when American corporations were sitting on $2.3 trillion in currency) and would eliminate the *Affordable Care Act's* Individual Mandate, essentially crippling the health care program as millions of healthy, young Americans would now opt out (. . . thereby more or less negging the whole idea behind the insurance).

According to Mark Shield's during a PBS NewsHour discussion of the tax cut, "Congressional Budget Office say that by 2027, people earning the princely sum of $40,000 to $50,000 will pay $5,300,000,000,000 (that's $5.3 trillion) in tax while individuals making over $1,000,000 will receive *cuts* in the amount $5,700,000,000,000 (that's $5.7 trillion)."

Continuing on, David Brooks (a conservative Republican commentator on that same show), said, "The plan has nothing to do with the intellectual work that real economists put in who are Republicans . . . the Republican Party has become detached from the Republican economic profession. And so, they pass a bill simply as *donor maintenance*; it's about hurting *their people* and helping *our people* without really any underlying economic philosophy behind it."

The bill is, in short, a tax cut for the rich and for corporations . . . all of which will nearly double the National Debt between 2017 to 2019 to over a trillion dollars. And with that as a backdrop, Congress just passed a $400 billion dollar spending budget . . . with no way to pay for it because, well, they just passed a *tax cut* bill . . . [16, 17]

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[16] After signing the bill, Vice President Pence rather unctuously said *on camera* to our great leader, "I am deeply humbled as your Vice President to be able to be here. Because of your leadership and because of the strong support of the leadership of the Congress, you've delivered that middle class miracle." With that, people in the nation *without* a multi-million dollar portfolio who knew what the bill was ultimately going to do to them threw up in their mouth (or so urban legend goes).

[17] This footnote was a part of a section I cut out, but I found it too amusing to leave out, so here it is: The actual budget that year included $700 billion for the military (if you summed the military budgets of other countries, you would have to add the seven countries with the next highest budgets to exceed that sum). On May 11, 2018, Bill Mayer had Republican Congressman Duncan Hunter come on his show. Asking about how the Republicans in Congress, who had so solidly stood on fiscal responsibility over the years, could justify creating a trillion dollar deficit (a deficit exacerbated by this new budget), this combat veteran said that the military needed the increase in funds because "there were four times the number of training death than combat death in the U.S. military in 2017—over 80!!!!!" Now

In a nutshell, Republicans appear to be "fiscally conservative" when it is convenient (translations: when they can use the idea to bash Democrats who propose programs designed to benefit the poor) but are more than happy to throw the idea out the window if it benefits both themselves and their rich and powerful benefactors . . . and so we are back to *suffused in light* or *clouded in darkness*?

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[Sounds like I'm just ragging on the Republicans . . .]

The Brothers never talked about politics. That means they never castigated specific people in politics nor do I remember them ever using the words *Democrat* or *Republican*. What they talked about were principles. I *have* been talking about politics, obviously, and it does seem as though I've been focused on what assholes Republicans are. Is there a basis for this (aside from their actions)?

There are a lot of ways that Democrat and Republican politicians are alike. They all want to be elected (or re-elected). They all need money to run their campaigns. They all love their family and dog. Most all feel strongly about their party.

If you had to identify an underlying characteristic of most Democrats in general, though, it would probably be a desire to make life good for everyone, especially the least of our population, the needy (hence, the *bleeding-heart liberal* moniker). If you had to identify an underlying characteristic of Republicans, it would probably be a desire to support *creators of wealth* (hence the *greed is good* moniker). This doesn't necessarily make Republicans bad people, but it does make them potentially shortsighted in a spiritual sense.

Given the general tendencies of Democrats to try to generate laws that help everyone including our most in need, and the general tendencies of Republicans to help out wealth-producers without much thought about what that might mean for the common folk (polluted waterways, union busting, defunded oversight agencies, those sorts of things), it doesn't take

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nobody is going to sniff at ANYBODY'S death, much less a service man's (or woman's), but I did find it interesting that he didn't seem to be particularly put off by the MILLIONS of Americans who would be losing their health care benefits (and possibly, as a consequence, their lives) due to the Republican instigated budget restrictions on the Affordable Care Act . . . it was those 80 plus service men he was hanging his hat on.

too great a leap to conclude that the Democrats are trying to take chaos and make order out of it (i.e., they are on a path to light) and the Republicans are doing the same but for a much small population (the 1%ers) even though that, on the whole, creates problem for most Americans suggesting a path to darkness.

A majority of Americans are Democrat, but Republicans are better politicians. Consequentially, Republicans control most of the state houses, both houses of Congress and the Presidency as of 2018. It was during that Congress that the actual repeal of Obamacare was attempted.

The 2020 elections saw two very unexpected outcomes. In response to the shit-show that was Donald Trump, Georgia elected two Senators that were *Democratic*. That gave the Senate a 50/50 split, which meant that the Democrats held the Senate with the tiebreaker being the Vice President (who was a Democrat). Democrats *lost* a bunch of seats in the House primarily due to the noise Progressives were making about defunding the police. Democrats still *held* the house, though, but only with a slight margin. With the 2020 outcome, a couple of legislative actions were taken by the new Biden Administration.

One was in response to a somewhat sinister move made by Republican statehouses. It was based on the Republican observation (admitted to in public by several Republican lawmakers) that because their party was in the minority within the country, they had a better chance of winning elections when *fewer* people voted. To affect that outcome, Republican state houses across the country passed laws designed to suppress voter turnout. That suppression was aimed at minority voters, almost all of whom were Democrats.

These moves included: closing voting sites so there would be only one, single site available to large numbers of people over a large area thereby insuring hours-long lines; making it illegal to provide water or food to people standing in those long, long lines; eliminating early voting; eliminating mail-in voting; requiring a voter photo ID while additionally closing DMV offices where IDs could be obtained; partisan gerrymandering (though both parties do this, there have been a few Democrat-controlled states that have gone to an independent-committee system to create district lines while no Republican-controlled states have even considered this); running out of ballots at polling sites by design; last minute poll-site relocations; voter challenges at polls; exact-match requirements for signatures or other information; proof of citizenship laws (not so unreasonable

on the surface, except many poor people don't have birth certificates, so complying with this is sometimes impossible); the requiring of payment of fines or fees as condition of vote restoration (this in states where the population has voted to let rehabilitated felons vote); no public outreach or notification to voters placed on inactive lists; lack of language-accessible materials; no curbside voting; no disability accessibility; and complicated absentee ballot requirements.

Biden's response to this was to urge Congress to pass a *Voters Rights Act* that would protect the voting rights of all Americans and make voting easier for all, not harder.[18] The bill would have no problem getting through the House because the Democrats had that small majority, but in the Senate where a bill would technically needed 51 votes to pass, there was a problem. Due to the possibility of a filibuster, the bill would REALLY need 60 votes to pass because that was the number of Senators needed to stop a filibuster.

Republicans were uniformly against a law designed to make voting easy, so there was no chance of getting the required 60 votes. The only way the Democrats might make things work was if they suspended the filibuster for that one bill. All they needed was the 50 Democrat Senators to buy into that move, and the VP could act as tiebreaker.

In theory, the filibuster is a mechanism that is designed to ensures that both sides of the aisle will work together to get bills passed. It gives the minority a way to reign in the majority. Because both parties know that sooner or later they will be in the minority, there is a lot of pressure NOT to change the rules while in the majority. What this additionally means is that when a party in the majority hints that it may eliminate the filibuster (usually when there is some bit of legislation the majority feels strongly about that the minority is determined to block), the minority can sometimes be cowed into NOT using the filibuster just to preserve its presence for a later time when it may *really* be needed.

There were two *flies in the ointment* having to do with all of this.

First, aside from providing tax cuts to the rich, the Republican party really didn't have much of a legislative agenda. That meant that the Dem-

[18] Interestingly, what made it possible for states to pass clearly prejudicial voter-restriction laws was the 2013 decision by the Roberts *Supreme Court* that essentially said there was no longer any racism in the U.S. and, therefore, there was no longer a need for the original *Voting Rights Act*. That act required certain states (primarily Southern Jim Crow states with a history of racism) to get a pre-clearance from the *Department of Justice* before changing any voting law. Within days of that decision (surprise, surprise), Republican run southern states began putting voter suppression laws on the books.

ocrats rarely had the opportunity to use the filibuster. The Republicans had all sorts of opportunities, given the Democrat's interest in generating bills that would actually be helpful for normal Americans. What's more, the few times the Republicans did have a bill they were keen on, they were perfectly happy to trash the filibuster for that one bill. In other words, the filibuster made life difficult for Democrat lawmakers but not so much for Republican lawmakers.

The second fly was named Joe Manchin from West Virginia. Being a Democrat from a purple states (i.e., a state where he could easily be voted out of office in favor of a Republican), and being that he wanted to be re-elected, and being that his vote was required to change the filibuster, all the Republicans had to do was to convince Joe that it was in his best interest to refuse to vote for the filibuster change (even though that move would be against the best interest of Biden's plan and certainly the best interest of the voters in states where voting was about to be suppressed by Republican sponsored state laws).

Manchin and Mitch McConnell (Republican leader of the Senate at the time) had lunch together one day, and lo and behold, shortly thereafter Joe came out against overriding the filibuster saying that doing so would damage the integrity of the Senate (can you smell the bullshit?). Knowing that the Democrats didn't have enough votes to change the rules on the filibuster, the Republicans knew they didn't need to make any concessions. That, in turn, trashed any leverage the Democrats might have had and essentially doomed the *Voting Rights Act*.

Were Joe's actions *suffused in light* or *clouded in darkness*? What do you think?

The second initiative President Biden tried to get through Congress was a bill that, if passed, would palpably make American's lives better. Due to opposition to much of what was in *that* bill, it was split into two bills, one that would surely pass—the *Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill* (BIB)—and one that was more problematic—the *Build Back Better Bill* (BBB).

In the *Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill*, $550 billion over five years was slated to be spent on roads and bridges, rail, transit, ports, airports, the electric grid, water systems and broadband. It was a ton of money, but it was needed. Republicans liked the idea that they could go back to their base and say, "Look what we did," and so with their support, it passed.

The items that had been taken out of the original, overall bill, landed in the *Build Back Better Bill*. It's original totaled was to be around 3.5

trillion dollars (later to be diminished to around 1.7 trillion). It would have covered things like universal childcare and preschool, clean energy and climate investments to help mitigate global warming and ween us off coal, a child tax credit, help with affordability of housing, help with home care (presumably for the elderly) and help making higher education affordable.

Republicans were adamantly opposed to all of this. It cost money, and although they were willing to give tax breaks to the rich, they weren't about to help out parents with universal preschool. So how to kill the bill?

I don't know this for sure, but I have a very serious hunch that during that lunch meeting between Manchin and McConnell, McConnell made a promise. Among other things, I suspect that McConnell told Manchin that if he scuttle Democrat's plans for any big spending bills that might come up, the Republican party would not put up any serious challenge to his (Manchin's) Senate seat when Manchin next came up for re-election. Again, I don't know this for a fact, but I did see in real time Manchin more or less torpedo pretty much every effort made by the Democrats and the White House to make BBB work. In short, he more or less single handedly kill the bill (I might add, though the spotlight was on Manchin for most of this time, I wouldn't be surprised to find that a similar deal was made with Arizona's Krysten Sinema, another vulnerable Democrat in a purple state, who also didn't seem particularly interested in making anything work).

Again, are we looking at individuals whose motivations are for what is best for the whole of the country or what is best for themselves? Seems pretty clear to me, but you can make up your own mind.

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[Still more . . .]

We have had a chance to see some not-so-noble acts from Democrats, so I haven't been focused completely on the Republican party, but I am going to go back to the Republicans for one last look because they have done some truly outstanding work if you happen to be rooting for the Dark Side.

The bit of amazement I am referring to is the Republican leadership's historic, decades long denial of both global warming and humankind's responsibility for its acceleration. This forced ignorance and science denial is based, I think, on two things.

The least is the fact that Republicans depend upon the religious Christian right for votes, and a fair portion of that population believes that God

made the world in seven days (actually six—on the seventh He rested). They don't have a lot of use or confidence in science, so when essentially all of the independent scientists in the world say that the planet is warming and it is the fault of carbon dioxide (and methane) emissions generated by human activity, they aren't so quick to take the pronouncement seriously (this, especially when the industries involved—coil, natural gas and fossil fuels—have done such a good job of propagandizing about the subject). For those folks, it probably won't be until hurricanes and tornadoes get so colossal and frequent that they have no choice but to notice. That is when they *may* accept the idea of global warming.

A considerably more important roadblock to accepting this for Republican lawmakers is economics. If they accept responsibility for messing up the planet, they may be found liable (think about the legal claims inhabitants of a small island nation might have if that island is swallowed up by rising sea levels and it has been established that global warming was caused by the more developed nations). That could cost big money.

Accepting global warming would also mean a need to make changes. That would definitely cost money and possibly jobs (Republicans are known for waxing poetic about the horrors of middle-class Americans job lose . . . until, of course, shipping jobs overseas becomes good for industry's bottom line, or robots replacing workers is found to be a more profitable way to negotiate the making of, say, cars, at which time job loss isn't such a horror for them). People who have made their fortunate in fossil fuels and coal (and the lobbyists who have driven through Congressional and local bills to help them further do that) would have to forgo further largess, and people who are into making money don't do stuff like that easily. Remember, it's all about the creation of wealth . . . and we aren't talking about wealth for the little guy, we are talking about wealth for the already wealthy.

So we have an EPA head in the Trump administration publicly state that carbon dioxide is not a major player in global warming, presumably in an attempt to pave the way for deregulating carbon dioxide emissions of coal burning power plants. And even better, the guy ordered the scrubbing of the EPA's on-line files of any mention of *global warming* . . . as though deleting all that information would make people forget about it or come to conclude that the problem didn't really exist.

. . . Actions *suffused in light* or *shrouded in darkness*? I see the Dark Side playing on the moral and ethical weaknesses of all of these individuals, and what we are inheriting is chaos being generated from what could

have been order.

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[Not quite done . . .]

And one last thing, which I kind of hesitate to mention but think I should in the off-chance it isn't obvious to the reader. Although I've been talking about actions that are *suffused in light* and actions that are *shrouded in darkness*, there is one other adage you should always keep in mind: *judge not* . . .

Translation: The underlying basis of this chapter has to do with what the Brothers have told us, but there is a difference between *observation* and *judgement*. When you see someone doing something you think isn't good, you may be seeing actions shrouded in darkness and tainted by the Dark Side, or you may not. You always have to remember that you are filtering what you are seeing through your own child-self.

Going back to *Speaker of the House* Paul Ryan (this, as of 2018): Ryan retired in 2018 saying he wanted to spend more time with his family. Paraphrasing Maya Miles summary of him when she was on the April 13, 2018 *Bill Mayer Show*, "His philosophy from the beginning was to feed the wealthy, starve everyone else. What he's most proud of is that the new tax law lets people making $700,000 get $85,000 back in tax refunds, and people making $40,000 getting $300 back. What's he's been brilliant at is wrapping a lot of meanness in *kind words* as he screws people."

Yet is he soul-less? Acting in ways that are detrimental to millions of souls is a karmic weight that I suspect one might not slip easily. Yet I have no idea what the Karmic Law will do with a Being like Ryan. On the surface, the smugness, the arrogance, the seeming willful disinterest in the pain he has caused to all those millions, it's hard not to root for his destruction. But only Karma can see into the heart of an individual; only the Law and his own Higher Mind knows if there is anything there worth keeping.

And there is *that other problem*. He is a part of our collective. Moving into *the sleep* after having been stripped of everything you have accumulated about yourself through all your efforts over all of your incarnations (assuming my version of Avici is correct), that is a HUGE loss of time and focus and energy, and a real tragedy not only for the Being but also *for everyone in the collective* (and if Cathy's version is more accurate, even going into her version of the *deep sleep* is sad as it means losing so

much time in one's spiritual journey).

In short, as insufferable as the man is, and as much pain and suffering as he has caused, and as much as he oozes self-preferment, he is one of our own, a Consciousness that is a part of our human family, and for that I have very mixed emotions when it comes to his loss should it happen.

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[And some even MORE exciting, fun stuff to contemplate . . .]

The Feb 23,2024 *On the Media* program had an interesting expose of the Charismatic Christian movement. Called a fringe group by some, it has enormous influence in the world of politics. Matthew D Tailor, a scholar at the *Institute of Islamic, Christian and Jewish Studies* in Baltimore, and someone who was raised in the Charismatic Church, explained the movement. Summarizing: There are, within the theology of this group, seven "mountains" (family, religion, education, government, arts and entertainment, media, and business or commerce) that need to be conquered. Dubbed *Dominion Theology*, the goal is to put people at the top of each mountain where they might reform and remake society from the top down in the name of Christ. What's even more exciting is that they believe that the mountains are either controlled by forces representing the kingdom of God, or by demons.[19] In other words, they see the gaining of political power as spiritual warfare.

An example of the world they envision was nicely displayed when Chief Justice Tom Parker of the Alabama Supreme Court ruled that frozen embryos cannot be destroyed because "each person is made in God's image, and even before birth their lives cannot be destroyed without effacing His glory." I'm pretty sure the Dark Side is giddy with delight. Nothing like having highly fallible people in positions of enormous power (I'm thinking now about the six conservative members of *the United States Supreme Court*) who believe they are special in their beliefs about God, and who have convinced themselves that stomping all over the rights of anybody and everybody who doesn't agree with them is in accordance with

[19] Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives from 2007 to 2011 and again from 2019 to 2023, was identified as "a demon" by Christian conspiracy theorists. In 2022, a man acted on the accusation by invading Pelosi's home in California (Pelosi was not there but her husband was) presumably to do an exorcism (?). In the process he attacked Pelosi's husband with a hammer.

the *will of their God* (not to mention *the Constitution*). Kind of reminds me of the mindset that produced the Spanish Inquisition.

Suffused in light or tinged with darkness? This stuff is right down the Dark Side's alley . . . [20]

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[20] I'm writing this several months after I wrote this section. I'm not trying to be an alarmist, but the more I see of the decision-making of some of our courts, the Supreme Court with its six conservative justices included, the more I'm seeing the exploitation of power "at the top" to further the goal of the Charismatics (which is to say, to make America a white, straight, Christian nation "again").

Ignoring the State Supreme Court ruling mentioned above, a March 27, 2024 PBS NewsHour segment on a document called *Project 2025* made this horrifyingly clear. Prepared by around 100 right-wing organizations led by the conservative think tank *The Heritage Foundation*, it is a "detailed playbook" for Donald Trump's Presidency should he be elected in the 2024 election.

Among other things, the plan sees Trump stopping any and all governmental acceptance and acknowledgement of the idea of gender identity and any rights the LGBTQ community might have, period. Policies that help minority groups will be on the chopping block. This will include deleting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion offices from federal agencies. It will curtail the teaching of race and racism in our schools. It will urge Congress to ban federal funds to Critical Race Theory training (which is ridiculous because nobody teaches Critical Race Theory to high school students in any case). It champions the elimination of the Civil Service agencies in the U.S. (the Department of Education, etc.).

In Laura Barron-Lopez's words (she was the one reporting in the segment), "Trump has vowed on the campaign trail to terminate all DEI programs." The paper additionally suggests that Trump could work around or ignore Congressional oversight. As pointed out by Kim Wehle, Professor of Law at the University of Baltimore (paraphrasing), " . . . the question isn't so much what the law authorizes. If he has an army of employees (at the federal level) that are willing to be loyal to whatever he wants, and if they implement what he directs, the question will be, "Will there be pushback?" Not likely if there are loyalists in Congress; not likely if the courts are populated by loyalists; not likely if the voters accept whatever he does without question (as so many do now)."

Said Professor Thomas Zimmer, who studies authoritarian regimes at Georgetown: "With loyalists across the board he can overlay a white, Christian, evangelical ideal on American society. The type of purging Trump (and Project 2025) is talking about takes root in the McCarthyism of the early 1950's, where they essentially tried to sweep away anyone across American society that deviated from perceived norms." And again, the Dark Side has to be beside itself with glee: all that self-preferment, all that chaos, all that strife.

Except there is one more thing: Remember the Brothers mentioning that meeting of the Dark Ones in which plans for the future were being made? I suspect we are seeing more of the fruits of that meeting (and others) here. I don't remember what pundit observed this (I think it was on the PBS News Hour), but while Democrats were focused on gaining public support for their views on abortion, etc., the Republicans were focused BY DESIGN on gaining access and control of the levers of power. With those levers at their disposal, they can do pretty-much anything they want. What's more, something like 70% of the public servants in the Federal Government are career employees that can't be fired, but there is something called Schedule F that would allow the President to change the status of a public

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[But the fun never stops . . . }

The hallmark of the Dark Side is the sowing of seeds of chaos. It's 2024 and, as my AP Physics students say after a hard test, it's been *a doozie*. AI (artificial intelligence) has progressed to a point where anyone on the planet with a computer can generate realistic videos and audios that are almost impossible to identify as fake (hence the name, *deep fake*). Technology is neutral, it can go in whatever way you push it, but when something like this is used by a weak mind whose insecurity and/or arrogance and/or insensitivity and/or avarice is great, you have the makings for a very chaotic world.

Point of order: Several years ago a reporter tape Donald Trump saying, "Because I'm a celebrity, I can grab women's pussy and get away with it." Most basically decent folks were horrified. Trump didn't care. He knew his base would accept anything he did (another of his quotes: "I could shoot someone and I wouldn't lose any voters."). But what if he did care, and what if it happened just yesterday? Trump would have an airtight defense. All he'd have to say is, "It's a deep fake." Without the ability to tell if the audio tape was real, he could short-circuit any criticism that may be levied against him.

Put a little differently, we are now in an age where *any* documentation of a wrongdoing by anyone can be waived away with the claim, "It's a deep fake," and nobody will ever be able to prove otherwise. This technology forever removes the possibility of ever knowing what really happened in an incident, and as such gives bad actors cover whenever they are caught doing anything bad . . . and again, the Dark Side has to be absolutely THRILLED by the prospect.[21]

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servant's job to that of *political appointee*, and political appointees CAN be fired if they don't follow orders. So if, for instance, an EPA head doesn't do exactly what Trump tells him (or her) to do, he can be fired with a loyalist put in his place. And we are right back to the Dark Side and glee.

[21] As far as I'm concerned, the most important part of this autobiography is Chapters 5 through 12. That is the part I really want people to read and understand. What you are about to read is an oblique musing on how karma works. I hope you find it interesting, but understand that it is not vital to the core of the book. That said:

It is July 15, 2024. I am within a few days of submitting Volume 1 for formal publication. A week ago, everyone was all atwitter about whether President Joe Biden should drop

out of the Presidential race due to his age and apparent cognitive lapses. He had done an embarrassingly horrible job in the debate a month or so earlier with Trump, mumbling and stumbling and generally seeming out of it. Everyone is giving him the choice to go or stay in the race. Tons of people wanted him to pull out because everyone is terrified of what will happen if Trump is elected, and right now Trump is way ahead in the polls.

A few days ago, Biden gave a news conference in which he tried to allay peoples' fears about himself. He spoke knowledgeably about all sorts of things, but at one point identified his Vice President as "Vice President Trump" instead of "Vice President Harris," and so that is all people in conventional news outlets are talking about (thereby giving Trump a pass on having entertained Viktor Orban at Mar-a-Lago during that same time period—for those of you who don't know, Orban is the anti-democratic autocrat who runs Hungary and who has become the darling of Republican lawmakers).

As things stood before that news conference, in other words, people had to decide whether to elect a Presidential candidate who was clearly old, who knew a lot and had done a lot but who seemed to have cognitive problems and who bumbled a lot (but who would have good people around him if elected, and who really wanted the best for the country and the country's democracy) or a sociopath whose only real interest was himself and who was a known, nearly pathological liar. Incredibly, as I said, the polls have Trump ahead by a wide margin.

I pointed out in a footnote in an earlier chapter that if Trump was elected President, groundwork had been laid by the Supreme Court to allow him to remake the United States in his own image (i.e., as an autocracy). I tried to give a little hope by pointing out that you never know what karma might have up its sleeve, and so life may not take us in the direction we seem to be headed.

Well, we may well have just witnessed that karmic twist.

Two days ago (July 14), someone tried to assassinate Trump. One person was killed with two others seriously injured, but Trump was just grazed in the cheek. With blood on his face, he defiantly shook his fist as he was being hustled off the stage, mouthing the words, "Fight, fight, fight" as he went. Biden went on TV the next day to appeal to the country for calm, and to try to remind the nation that political violence is not who we are (or, at least, who we should be). Most of the speech was good, but he did flub once referring to Trump as "ex Trump" instead of "ex-President Trump," so he was still showing his age and seeming confusion—argh!

Some Republican lawmakers were reasonable and urged a drawing down of the inflammatory rhetoric. Others chose to make political hay and maintain that Biden was responsible. He had unfortunately given them all the ammunition they needed (though when have facts ever stopped them from making outrageous claims). In an attempt to redirect Democrat concerns from himself to Trump, he (Biden) sent out an email a few days earlier that effectively said *stop the handwringing and put Trump in the bullseye*. All he was trying to do was to refocus attention from himself to Trump *where it should have been*, but Republican firebrands claimed that Biden's words had been "incendiary" and the catalyst for the attack.

(This, by itself, is freakishly amusing. It is Republicans who are supported by White Nationalists, and White Nationalists that are one of the main proponents of violence in our country today. There are Republican lawmakers who have run campaign ads in which they've brandished automatic weapons and said, effectively, *look out Dems*. And just recently, Kevin Roberts, head of the Heritage Foundation (a conservative "research and ed-

ucation" institute) said, "We are in a second revolution (that being Project 2025) which will remain bloodless if the left allows it to be" to which Bill Mayer said in his July 12, 2024 show, "Really. That's what we think America should be? Do what we say or it gets bloody?" As I said, *freakishly amusing*.)

But back on track, if Trump is to lose, what might karma's little surprise be?

The Republican National Convention starts next week. If Trump has half a brain, he will speak in conciliatory tones about the attack thereby giving undecided voters the idea that he can be reasonable and trustworthy in the face of a crisis. But I saw Trump's face on the news seconds after the attempt. He was enraged. He left the stage shaking his fist. I will be very surprised if his anger doesn't come bursting forth during the Convention. And if he is *too* outlandish with his veiled and not-so-veiled threats and calls for revenge, he may come across as so out-of-control ("incendiary?") and crazy that he unwittingly reminds undecided voters in swing states who he is and who they will be stuck with if they carry on in the direction they are going and help to elect him to the Presidency. And if that happens, Trump will have hung himself with his own rope and *you* will have seen karma in motion in a *very mysterious way*.

Then again, it may be karmically "right" for Trump to become President. I guess we'll see how this plays out.

Chapter 31

Letters

[We've just spent sixteen chapters on what I've called "Musings." In them, I've tried to animate the ideas the Brothers brought into my sphere of thinking while looking at how I've used those ideas to negotiate my life. The topics have been strewn far afield, but they have all had content I feel informs who I am. It's now time to get back to a more chronological presentation. Here goes.]

It was Saturday, March 21, 2009, the first day of Spring Break for my school, and I'd had a miserable cold from the previous week. I'd taken antibiotics—something that always seemed to help even though technically they shouldn't work on a virus . . . which is to suggest that my colds turned into bacterial infections pretty fast. The antibiotics were working. When I awoke, my throat was no longer sore and aside from a bit of lung congestion, I felt pretty good. Or, at least, I should have. Unfortunately, that morning I woke up with a headache—a problem I'd been having on and off in an exaggerated form during the previous year.

I took two Excedrin (product placement . . . shouldn't I be getting paid for this?) and followed them with a blast of Migranol, the aerosol migraine-headache medication I'd been prescribed years earlier. A few minutes later, I did what every good, red-blooded American does once a day if they are lucky . . . I sat myself down on the commode and took a dump (hey, it's estimated that Americans produce upwards of 120,000,000 pounds of fecal waste every day . . . I may be a slacker in some respect, but in that area I make every effort to do my part!). As always, I looked at one page of Sunday's *Los Angeles Times* (newspaper) funnies, then turned to an as yet unread copy of an old *Times* magazine. The article I landed on was written by Nancy Gibbs (this was on the last page of the February 2, 2009 edition), which started out:

> "NEVER DID A PRISONER, RELEASED FROM HIS CHAINS, feel such relief as I shall on shaking off the shackles

of power," declared Thomas Jefferson upon departing the presidency. Now he could retreat to Monticello, read Plato in Greek, plan and plant his University of Virginia.

Upon reading this, I felt a great swelling of gratitude flow over me. At least part of it was due to the fact that the Excedrin was taking hold and the brain-binding headache was beginning to lift. But beyond that, I knew I was at a point in my life where I had done my duty and now had the gift of time to draw back and think and reflect . . . (and, then, there was that dump, which is kind of *old person's* humor, but for you young folk, you'll get the joke if you live long enough.)

_____x_____

New topic: Ten or fifteen years after I started with the Brothers, I went to Boston to attend a workshop on a new and promising educational tool—the computer.[1] When I was there, I was befriended by a very pretty young woman who was a part of a fundamentalist Christian group in the city. She invited me to one of her group's meetings. Having nothing better to do, and being a bit curious to see what went on in their meetings, I attended.

It didn't take long before the leader of the group rather pointed asked me to "shut the fuck up." They evidently didn't appreciate my pointing out that although Christians take Christ's ability to do miracles—water into wine, etc.—as a sign of Christ's divinity, there are places in the world, notably India, where the ability to materialize physical objects is considered not that big a deal. All one needs is a little bit of training (well, OK, a lot of training) and the ability to form a mental matrix of the desired object in such a focused and complete way that the energy associated with the thought literally clothes the thought in matter (remember, matter is just another form of energy, and thought has, according to the Brothers, energy).

I came away from the meeting being a bit of a pariah, but the girl seemed interested. What followed were several phone conversations before she finally signed off after the people in her group told her that she

[1] One of the things we did in the workshop was to take the rangefinder from a self-focusing camera and build a Motion Detector (this is a device that allows one to use a computer to take data associated with the position of an object in motion and create a real-time graph of that motion), complete with the connectors required to hook the device into a Macintosh Plus. This was VERY COOL STUFF for the time.

was being tempted by Satan and would be damned to hell if she continued talking to me. That was that.

One of the things that was notable in retrospect was that at the time I was in Boston, I had no idea how fervently my child-self would strive to use the knowledge it had to woe desirable females. I talked about the ideas the Brothers had given me, but I didn't really understand what underlay my sex drive and, as a consequence, I wasn't aware of how strongly I was interweaving what I was saying from them with personal-self stuff that was aimed at generating a mate.[2]

In any case, the reasons I'm telling the story is that during our conversations it appeared that we might begin corresponding. She had such a standard, Christian take on everything, and I had relatively thoughtful responses for pretty much everything she said. It therefore passed through my mind that if we did begin to correspond it might be interesting for people who were open minded but unaware of the east's perspective on things to read the ins-and-outs of our interaction in a book. In other words, I thought seriously about publishing our collected letters, should they happen (though she'd have probably sued me if I had).

They never did happen, which was OK with me. But several times in my life, especially with the advent of email, I've thought that the back and forth I was engaged in with some thoughtful person might be interesting and useful to an outside reader.

That also never happened, so this is where this chapter should end.

. . . And for those of you who are scratching your head right now, wondering why this chapter is here at all, I supposed it is a bit of a lark. Aside from the fact that I really did want to compile a book of letters between someone who knew nothing about the eastern philosophies and myself, I thought the statistic associated with the "taking a dump" observation was so interesting and amusing that I just couldn't bring myself to throw it

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[2] That tendency became horrifyingly obvious when I went back and read the email interaction I had with Mary. Some of the things I said were profoundly on target, but some of the things I said were sappy, emotional and generally tainted with self-interest. At several points, when my giving her good advice had the potential of thwarting something I personally wanted, I simply didn't give her any advice even though I had it at my fingertips.

All of this was, of course, very educational. As I said earlier, I'd never agreed with the adage that men and women could never really be good friends, but that encounter, once I saw it for what it was, should have given me a clue that when a personal-self agenda is involved, the lesser-side of the child-self can never really be complete friends with anyone.

and this would-be chapter out. :)

Apologies. I won't do this again.

So now, back to my story . . .

Chapter 32

A Little Problem With My Heart

[I originally wrote this in real time, but as I didn't die from the experience I've since gone back and re-written the episode.]

It was June 13, 2009. The three things I had planned for the summer were to go to Colorado to grade physics AP tests, to take a Wilderness First Responder recertification course at the Grand Canyon[1] and to hike into a "meet" spot with two teachers from Poly (Eric Strom and John Fay) to re-supply a third teacher (Grace Hamilton) who, with her boyfriend (Jonathan Dunn), was hiking the John Muir trail. This last effort was going to require that we hike for two miles up and over a relatively high pass in the Southern Sierras, then hike five miles on the other side to get to the rendezvous point.

I was supposed to leave for the AP reading on June 15. The re-cert class was supposed to happen a week after I got back. The "meet" hike was supposed to happen August 1.

I didn't do any of it. And why not? Funny you should ask.

During the senior trip at the Kern River that year, I rafted the first day (throwing buckets of water on unsuspecting students is always a hoot) and white-water kayaked the third and fourth days. On the second day, I joined a hiking group that went up into the Sequoias.

It was the hike that was interesting. We did a very benign saunter in a Sequoia grove that is twenty or so miles north of Kernville, then did a more strenuous two to three mile hike up to a *fire lookout* in the surrounding mountains.

[1] I'm not sure if I've mentioned this, but the school sent five or six teachers to Yosemite about ten years earlier to take a ten-days, 80-hour course in wilderness medicine. We came out with a Wilderness First Responder certificate that qualified us as backcountry first responders, and that required recertification every two years. It's currently 2024, and I've done the recert at a minimum ten times . . .

I wasn't pushing hard up the *fire lookout trail* as I had found from experience over the previous five or so years that when I would push too hard, my legs would exhaust and I would find myself quite literally *done for the day*. It was almost as though my legs weren't able to oxygenate properly when edged over their limit.

That said, I was a little surprised to find that two-thirds of the way through the *fire-lookout* hike my legs were fine but my chest tightened down on me. Thinking *heart attack,* I sat down and composed myself until it passed. I then proceeded on carefully and slowly. After a short distance, I had to sit down again. Then again. Then again. I got to the lookout, hung out for a while with the students, then walked back (downhill) with no further complications.

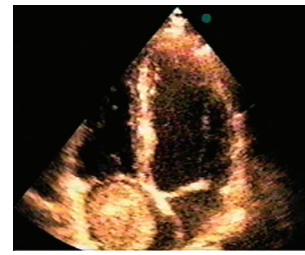
Part of the reason I wasn't too concerned was due to the fact that I didn't have pain down my left arm or shortness of breath during the episode. Those are usually present during a heart attack so their absence was encouraging. I do remember thinking, though, that if I was having trouble with such a relatively easy hike *without* a pack, there was no way I was going to be able to negotiate the "meet" hike in August. Not, that is, unless I spent the first part of the summer going to the Caltech gym to work on my legs and stamina. That, I decided, was what I would do.

The week after the trip, I experienced little jabbing pains in my chest. This was not an uncommon occurrence—such pains had in the past been caused by a reflex into the chest diaphragm that controls my breathing due to unhappy bowels (ah, potty humor . . . you just can't beat it). That, though, coupled with the tightening of the chest during that senior-trip hike, motivated me to go in and see my doctor.

Dr Pachorek has been my GP since I began at Poly. He is a nice fellow and although we haven't always seen eye-to-eye on things, I do like him. He did an EKG, which was OK, but then suggested that I go downstairs and see a cardiologist friend of his, just to be safe. Fifteen minutes later, I was talking to the cardiologist (amazing, two different doctors with no wait-period in between). He noted that I was in particularly good shape (not a lot of 61-year-olds who still surf, white water kayak and rock climb), said he didn't think there was a problem but ended the conversation by saying he wanted me to have a *stress test* the next day, just for giggles.

I arrived the next day to do the *stress test* but we never got to it. Upon hooking me up to an ultrasound device, the cardiologist found that I had a golf-ball sized tumor bouncing around in the lower right chamber (the atrium) of my heart (the tumor is the egg-shaped object shown in

the bottom-left of the photo). He showed me the action, which was very impressive, not to mention a bit amusing. The mass completely filled the cavity and cavorted merrily inside the space every time the heart beat (the doctor was beside himself with excitement—he was an old guy and had only seen this kind of thing twice in his entire career).



My reaction, after laughing at the silly thing bouncing up and down in my heart, was, "Well, I have to go grade AP tests for a week, then a week later I have to go to do the recert course for WFR, so after that I'm good to do whatever you think we need to do."

The cardiologist's reaction was, "I don't think so. You need to have this taken care of right away."

I wasn't going to argue with him. He made a quick call to a surgeon who was supposed to be tops in the field (he had evidently been called in when Arnold Schwarzenegger was in need), then ordered up an angiogram (minor but surprising note: after the angiogram, the cardiologist said that my arteries were *clean as a whistle*—this, I'm sure, will come as quite a shock to many of my friends who, due to my profuse use of butter in foods—as much as a quarter of a pound per day at times—have been betting for years that I would die of clogged arteries and a heart attack).

Within three days, I was talking to the surgeon about having the mass, called a myxoma, removed.

As I've made clear by now, I've seen *the other side* and death doesn't worry me in the slightest. Having said that, two rather significant things popped into my head as a consequence of this situation. Both need preamble.

_____x_____

[. . . something trivial to consider.]

First. the nights before I went in to see the surgeon, I noticed that the area in my crotch where they had inserted the probe for the angiogram was swollen and discolored dark red. That meant, I assumed, that the little plastic plug they had inserted into the artery to plug the hole they made to do the angiogram was leaking and I was essentially bleeding internally (in fact, what I was seeing was evidently normal, but I didn't know that at the

time).

The prospect of dying didn't bother me a bit, but the prospect that they would have to shoot up the area with some kind of anesthetic and, maybe, cut open the leg so they could re-insert another of the little plastic plug devices left me cold . . . no, I mean, *really* cold, as in *really unsettled*.

With this as a backdrop, I went to see the surgeon the next day.

There was nobody in the waiting room, but it took a while to get into one of the private rooms in the doctor's complex. While I was sitting there, feeling on the one hand quite good about myself because I wasn't afraid to die but feeling on the other hand quite unnerved because they might have to mess with that plug in my leg, it dawned on me that I was, in the confines of my own small self, behaving quite badly.

When I'm river kayaking and I approach a class-three rapid,[2] I'm not worried or afraid but I still always give the rapid a blessing before entering it. I acknowledge that its presence in nature has given a lot of people pleasure and a thrill and a challenge, and I acknowledge that that piece of water could easily dump me in an instant if I was not being attentive and appropriately humble. *Every time* I've gone into a rapid being cocky, I've gotten flipped.

So there I was, doing everything I could to make it clear to people that *I was special, I wasn't afraid of death*. No humility; no blessing; no nothing.

In that fog, I was ignoring the fact that most people are terrified to death of death. That, in turn, should have motivated me to turn off the smugness and instead focus on mentally projecting a blessing to those who were going through what I was going through. Uncertainty, fear, possibly panic, anger, resentment, all of these thought-forms present themselves to people who know that they may well die in the next few days. I should have been thinking about trying to lighten the thought-forms that I knew were enveloping most of them. I hadn't been using my time doing anything useful, though, because *I was special, I wasn't afraid of death*.

The enlightenments came swiftly, as enlightenments tend to do. And as a consequence, I sent out a blessing and a mental apology to life for being such a thoughtless ass.

The second thing that dawned on me was even more interesting, not

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[2] This is not a really big rapid by kayaker's standards, but it's the biggest I've ever done, not without power and can be scary when, as a beginner or relatively inexperienced kayaker (and if I am anything, it's inexperienced), you first give it a try . . .

to mention esoteric, and also requires background. In providing this, I am probably going to be giving you way more information about me than you'll want to know. Please understand that the conclusions I draw at the end will be worth it, though, so excuse the preamble.

x

[. . . an observation about sex-drive and pornography.]

As I've already established, one of the major problems I've had in this life has been in dealing with females and sex. There has just been something about the female form and the desire to interact with the female form that I've found impossible to set aside.

This is not, I think, such a surprising problem. St. Francis was quite a rake before he settled down into a spiritually whole life (the Brothers said he fought with the sexual energies till the day he died), and various of the saints reported having to thrash around mightily with their desires concerning women with some succeeding to allay their urges and some, I suspect, not. The point is, anyone who attempts to follow a spiritual path is in all probability going to find him or herself having to deal with this.

My intention after Kay died was two-fold: I wanted to better understand *what* was driving me in this regard, and I wanted to come into some kind of understanding as to *how to deal* with what was driving me. I knew I was going to be writing about the problem (hence the chapter titled "That Bugaboo Sex" a few chapters back). Actually understanding what I was talking about was kind of important.

If it had been fifty years ago and I wanted to immerse myself into the world of sex, my absence of a girlfriend coupled with this abiding fascination with the female form would probably have nudged me into purchasing such magazines as "Playboy" or "Penthouse" or "Hustler." Either that, or if I knew the right guy, I could have watched porno movies using a reel-to-reel projector[3] (or, for that matter, I could have engaged a hooker, though

[3] When I was young, I saw only one such porn movie while in college. It took place at a fraternity retreat that happened on a ranch up in Prescott, Arizona, owned by the parents of one of the guys in my house. I had a girlfriend at the time (the girl I almost married), was having sex regularly and didn't find the proceedings particularly entertaining, not to mention sexy, but I watched it because that was what everyone else was doing. The one thing I did notice was how sadly unattractive the woman doing the deed was. That was the norm at the time. Only "plain" girls made pornography.

that is something I have never even considered).

This isn't fifty years ago, though, and as I'm sure you know the access-point to such thing in this day and age is the Internet. So feeling nudged, I spent some time after Kay died wandering around what are euphemistically called "adult entertainment sites" on the Web. This was not a hard thing to flow into.

What absolutely blew me away when I started looking at these Internet sites was not only the sheer volume of females to be found there, but the sheer volume of *really attractive* females that were there. I can remember finding scrollable pages that included upwards of a hundred thumbnails of pretty young women doing everything imaginable. What was wild was that if you clicked on one of those thumbnails, it would take you to another scrollable page with another hundred thumbnails. If you clicked on one of those thumbnails, you'd find yourself on another scrollable page. They just kept coming, one after another. The weight of activity in the industry was staggering.[4]

Although I assiduously stayed away from blatant child porn (that anyone would have a little kid do sexual things is truly despicable), my viewing was all over the place. Most of the women were young adults. Pretty much all of the sites claimed that their girls were at least eighteen, though who knew for sure? I can't tell the difference between a mature sixteen-year-old, which would technically be *child porn*, and a normal twenty-four-year-old. The age thing is all very murky.[5] (Truthfully, the

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And as a completely unrelated, somewhat bawdy non sequitur: Prescott, Arizona, is "down the mountain" some from Flagstaff if you are traveling toward Phoenix. I was in Flagstaff a few years later and, having stopped in at a restaurant, used their restroom. Over the urinal was a sign that read, "Please flush; Prescott needs the water."

[4] Friendly warning: Though looking at porn can be entertaining and alluring, especially if you don't have someone to love, it can act like any other possibly addictive "substance," which is to say that there is a very good chance it will cost you in the long run. "Porn creep" is not a "creeps who watches porn." Rather, it refers to that subset of viewers who get into the unenviable position of not being able to "get excited and perform" when confronted by a real relationship with a real girl, because the thought-forms they have focused on while watching porn aren't generally animated by real, live, females. They are fantasies, pure and simple, based solely on the world of thought. I talked about this a few chapters back.

[5] Kate Mara is a very pretty, 30-year-old actress who is currently playing the part of Zoe Barnes in the first season's episodes of Netflix's Kevin Spacey drama "House of Cards." Her part is that of an aggressive newspaper woman who is out for scoops and gets involved with Spacey. As a consequence, she has sex with him on-screen (obviously simulated). What was fascinating was that I saw her in a trailer for what was, I think, a "Law and Order" episode in which she played a 15-year-old (?) gymnast (I didn't watch the whole episode—she was definitely a high school student and I *think* she was supposed to be really

whole thing is murky—I'm just focusing on one aspect here.)

Rarely did I see a video in which the female involved didn't appear to be perfectly happy doing what she was doing. That is, in what I would call a *normal sex video* (versus the really weird S&M stuff), the female involved seemed to be doing the same kind of things she in all probability would have been doing in the privacy of her own home with her boyfriend or husband. The primary difference was that she was doing it with a camera trained on her. (Clearly a *forced sex* situation would feature a very unhappy looking female, but even in that genre there are videos out there in which the drama is broken when something unexpected happened—the girl bumps into a hanging mike or whatever—and the beleaguered female will break character and ended up laughing along with the rest of the crew).

What got me thinking, though, was a documentary on HBO that looked at the adult industry. In it, one woman who had been in the business for years said that when she first began, she would work for a day, then go home and cry and cry and cry. I don't know if it was the pressure of societies norms or the fact that sex was never, in a cosmic sense, meant to be used as mere entertainment, but on some level this woman (and, in all likelihood, many of the women who are involved in this) knew that what she was doing was not something she ought to be doing.

I'm talking about all of this because during my foray into the world of porn, my guided fantasies *completely ignored* the fact that many of these physically attractive, smiling-faced females were doing what they were doing, not because they enjoyed it or because they were exhibitionist, but because they were in desperate straits and needed some way of generating an income (or possibly had an abusive boyfriend or husband who was using them as a cash cow). In other words, I was not in any way animating *compassion* as I sat there, watching the goings-on.

Understanding life and following a spiritual path are not always synonymous. That is, there are those whose "spiritual path" is comprised solely of fighting their demons tooth and nail by attempting to flagellate them out of existence (which, I might add, doesn't work, hence my discus-

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young) who was involved in a murder. When watching her in "House of Cards," she played a completely convincing reporter. But in the trailer I saw for the "Law and Order" show, she was completely believable as an underage high school student.

Another example was Juno Templeton, a 22-year-old female actor, who in the 2011 Matthew McConaughey movie *Killer Joe* played a fourteen year old virgin who McConaughey deflowered on screen, and who was quite believable in the part.

For the most part, I have no idea how old females (or males, for that matter) are by simply looking at them.

sion previously of Christ's admonition to "resist not evil"), and there are those whose *understanding of life* allows them to *transmute* those demons out of existence. My path was to try to *understand life*, and I was not succeeding.

This had serious significance above and beyond the obvious moral dilemma it suggested, but to understand how, *still more* information is needed.

_____x_____

[. . . chakric centers, the heart chakra and karma's response to shortsightedness]

The chakric energy-center associated with *compassion* is located in the *heart*. Compassion, of course, is associated with *an individual's ability to sympathetically empathize into the travails of someone else*.

Compassion was something I knew I needed to develop and nurture in me, so as I sat there in that waiting room it struck me hard how NOT SURPRISING it was that growing at the *seat of compassion* within me (my heart) was a foreign body that was JUST WRONG. That mass didn't belong there, just as my *lack of compassion* for the denizens of adult entertainment didn't belong, and both had the potential to kill me (though obviously on different levels—one on the physical level and the other on the spiritual level).

Men seeking erotic involvement is not a new thing. I know what motivates most when it comes to that kind of thing. I don't judge. I'm also not suggesting that everyone who watches porn is going to have life and karma "concrete" their unintentionally callous, mindless thinking about sex and women into a lump in their heart chakra (though I do believe that *the way you think* does, as a natural part of the system, regularly objectify itself into your physical world on some level).

The problem was that I was not an altogether normal guy. I was, for a time, somebody with a connection. Though I failed to make it to full chelahood for a whole lot of reasons, I was someone who had said to karma, "I want to move more quickly upon a spiritual path. And when I mess up, I want you to bring that to my attention with gusto."

I'd say that a wad of stuff bouncing around in my heart is certainly *getting my attention with gusto*.

From a metaphysical perspective, I found this fascinating.[6]

_____x_____

[. . . the operation.]

I went in to Huntington Hospital in Pasadena on a Friday, June 19, to have the myxoma removed. Instead of doing the "zipper" approach down the sternum, the surgeon who did the open-heart surgery went in from the right side between two ribs and didn't even bother to stop the heart (this was actually good as being hooked up to the heart machine evidently had all sorts of possible complications associated with it). Instead, they immobilized-with-a-clamp the part of the heart that had the problem, did the "snip-snip" required to remove the mass, then sowed me up, lickety-split.

By Monday afternoon I was walking around the ward (I covered six to eight tenths of a mile that afternoon walking in the ward, according to my calculations) and was released Monday evening. Two days later on Wednesday, Amber (a friend you will meet shortly) took me to Whole Foods where I bought dinner. We then went to Trader Joes, then Vons. I really wasn't in any pain (in fact, I *never* felt pain associated with my heart—all the pain I ran into was due to the incision in my side) and didn't feel the least bit fatigued from the outing.

I did have a few days when I felt weak while I was getting off the Vicodin, but aside from that the surgery's side effects were nil. They

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[6] I figure I've mentioned this before, but I'm going to mention it again here and now. It wouldn't be too big a jump for someone reading this to come to the conclusion that I'm giving way too much significance to what most people would classify as *random occurrences in my life*. After all, one might think, "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar" (thank you Doctor Freud!). The thing is, I've had so many instances in my life when remarkable changes, *physical* changes, have occurred literally in a heartbeat due to my coming into an understand of something in the confines of my own thinking, that the idea of life and karma moving me in ways that are "educational" is not, from my perspective, a surprise. And if there is a need for props in that effort (like a tumor in my heart), well, that doesn't surprise me much, either.

Adding to the weight of that sentiment, though this has nothing to do with why I feel as I do: In 2014, research scientists from John-Hopkins concluded that almost two-thirds of all cancers suffered by people are caused by random mutations, not genetics or the environment. That means that karma has a very broad pallet to paint from when it comes to sculpting health experiences for people. If I had made that claim ten years ago, people would have scoffed. Now, the claim that karma using what looks on the surface to be "random mutations" to affect an individual's life doesn't sound so *out there*, at least not from where I'm sitting.

wouldn't let me drive a car or ride my bike for three weeks, and I couldn't go surfing or do push-ups or pull-ups or any upper body exercising for a few months, but aside from that all I did after the operation was heal in relative quiet and comfort. I did a lot of reading. I did a lot of writing. I was really very lucky.

Open-heart surgery with little in the way of debilitating after-effects—it is remarkable what medicine has been able to accomplish since I was a kid . . . and it's amazing the lengths *karma* will go to make a point.

Chapter 33

Three Dreams

As dumb as this may sound, one of the things you will notice as you get older and established is that it is easy to see *where you've been* and *how you got there* when all is said and done. It is, on the other hand, very hard to see *where you are going* when it hasn't yet happened and all you have is your youth (again, as I said, a true but dumb observation). During college, I remember thinking that my relationship with the girl I almost married was all that mattered. We were going to move through life together, she and I, all the way. I even remember thinking at one point when I'd really screwed up with her that I had to be more conscious of what I was doing because, I believed, our success as a couple was in my hands to make or break. It never passed through my wee small brain that life (and karma) might have had other plans for me.

I wasn't there yet. I couldn't see where life would take me.

_____x_____

[A mother in need and an interesting premonition.]

After Kay died, I didn't have much going on socially so I spent a lot of my free time at night watching TV. *20/20* was an hour-long human-interest/news show I occasionally watched. The gist of one story that caught my eye one night was that a teenage girl had done some particularly terrible thing—as I remember she'd committed a robbery and, in the course of the robbery, she'd killed someone. The case was nationally known and, for whatever reason, the story was accompanied by peripheral stories that mused about everything from the girl's love life to how she was raised. 20/20's offering was a look at the life of the girl's mother.

The piece I saw was heartbreaking. The mother was black, uneducated and had had the girl when she was a teenager. The father left almost immediately and the young mother's family more or less disowned her leaving her alone to fend for herself and her child.

All the young mother could get was subsistence work, so this noble soul spent two hours every evening on a bus going to her job in a wealthy

neighborhood as a night maid, then at 4 AM made the two hour trip back to her home. She would get a few hours of sleep, then get up and go to her day job for eight more hours of work. With both jobs at minimum wage, she could just barely make ends meet, but she was able to feed, clothe and house her child. What she wasn't able to do was spend much time with her child.

In listening to the woman interviewed, it was obvious that she was very sweet and very sincere in her desire to do the right thing. As I said, it was a heartbreaking thing to watch . . . to know that someone who so wanted to have life turn out right for her and her child would have everything go so wrong.

I mention this here because after the fact, I remember thinking how much I wanted to help, if not that good woman, at least *some* deserving, beaten-upon human being. At the time, there were all sorts of reasons that something like that wasn't going to happen. To begin with, I didn't have any money. Additionally, I knew that even if I did, the minute it became known that I was out there trolling around for a deserving, downtrodden person to help out, every scam artist in town would be on me. It was, in short, a pipe dream that I conceded would probably never come to pass.

My dad died a few years later leaving me $600,000 in inheritance. The money didn't really change anything for me. I didn't need much to be happy and wasn't prone to buying things in any case, so me having money wasn't a lot different than me not having money.

After a few years, I still hadn't done anything with the inheritance.

Mom and I always ran parallel to one another and she always seemed to have enough money to do what she needed to do but no more. If things were following true to form (and they had pretty much done that throughout my life) and I was still following her pattern, I must have been drawn to that money for some reason. I just could see what it was.

I thought about giving a big wad to charity but decided against it because you never really know where money goes when you do something like that. Instead, I had it in my head that I wanted to do something that would make the life of an individual better. I just didn't see how that was going to happen (though I did sort of wonder if karma might not contrive an opportunity down the line at some point . . .).

_____x_____

[Three dreams:}

The three dreams I'm recounting here were at the beginning, middle and end of an interesting period of my life. I'll list the dreams first without any context, then I'll fill in between the lines.

The first dream saw me looking into a mirror, noticing that I had a small cut on my cheek that had been stitched. For some reason, I rubbed the area. The stitch broke lose. Within moments, enormous amounts of blood came gushing out of the wound.

My evaluation was that I had broken wide open and possibly damaged something that had been, before my ministrations, in the process of healing. What it was I didn't know, but that was what I concluded.

I didn't personally have the second dream; it was had by a woman-friend of mine. In it, she found herself dumping an enormous amount of concrete on top of me while I was standing in a pit. The concrete was hardening fast. She was horrified at what she had done, but as I began to crawl up out of the muck, another acquaintance came and smacked me with a shovel, beating me back down into the slurry. As it was happening, the assailant was saying, "Boy, this guy (meaning me) is tough."

My evaluation was that I was now stuck in a situation from which I would not be allowed to extricate myself.

The third dream found me in a kitchen. There was a steel counter under which existed what looked like a sink-well in the floor (an odd place for a sink, but that's where it was). At the bottom of the sink was a drain. The dream began with my pouring water into the drain, then turning to leave. As I approached the door, someone in the kitchen said, "Oh, oh, water's backing up." I turned to see the sink full of murky, standing water. I went back, got down on my hands and knees and put my hands into the brew. In doing so, I pulled out a thick, gloppy chunk of debris. With the removal of the offending mass, the water poured out the way it should.

My evaluation of the dream was that I was currently in a situation of my own making that was karmically blocked up, and that I had to (or was about to) undo the blockage allowing the situation to flow naturally.

PLEASE NOTE: I've listed the dreams first for good reason. What I am about to lay out is a segment of my after-Kay life when I did some things that were somewhat *outside the bounds* of what most people would do for others. I didn't do this because I was naive or deluded or wanted to look good. It happened (I'm quite certain) because on a whole lot of levels,

karma was nudging me to act. What's important to notes is that everything that happened was foreshadowed by these dreams, their existence suggesting that more was going on underneath the surface than meets the eye (as is always the case when karma pushes).

So now the story . . . except first . . .

_____x_____

[A few observations . . .]

Note 1: This extended episode was interesting for a number of reasons. The first was that this was karma giving me the opportunity to do what I had said to the universe I wanted to do, to lighten the load of some deserving soul in a life-altering way. Second, although Kay was dead and I had no way to get guidance from the Brothers, it was pretty clear that this was karma working pointedly and mysteriously to effect an end. I didn't know what the end was while things were happening, but I always find *karma in motion* fascinating and educational, which is a big part of why you're about to read about it here.

Note 2: In the original writing of this chapter, my main goal was to produce an accurate chronicling of my experience with the woman I previously identified as Amber. At this point in time, Amber and I are good friend. I have known her for many years and I know her quite well. In that original writing I talked about her childhood, her relationship with her parents, her kids, her relationship with me, her financial situation, her medical, physical and psychological state, her relationships with men, her everything imaginable and then some. I did this because I wanted to paint a very complete picture of her circumstance so the reader could fully understand why I did for her what I did for her and, more importantly, how karma was involved throughout.

The problem with this is that in writing the chapter as I did, I managed to violate Amber's privacy in a pretty spectacular way (I won't go into details, but karma has done a nice job recently of bringing this to my attention). If it had been me, that wouldn't have been such a big deal. I don't mind laying it all out in front of people. But Amber is a VERY PRIVATE PERSON who REALLY doesn't want people to know "stuff" about her. Her byline is, "It's none of your damn business!"

I don't want to dump the chapter because it is centered upon what has been an important part of my life for over a decade, and it belongs in the

book. On the other hand, I don't want you, Amber (should you ever read this) to feel betrayed. So what to do?

My solutions have been several. To begin with, I've jettisoned about half the chapter, excising much of the personal information and details I think Amber might have preferred not be included. I've used a pseudonym for her and her children. I've altered some of the details of the story to obscure her identity. And I am comforted in the knowledge that the people I know are not the people she knows, so there is little chance that anyone she knows will ever reads this.

With all of those "safeguards," I'm hoping that if she does read what is written here, she will not find anything I've said objectionable.

So here goes (for real):

_____x_____

[The story . . .]

If you will remember, about a year after my mom died (around 2007), Patty (my sister) got busted for dealing drugs out of the Highland house (Highland is around an hour drive east of Pasadena on the 210 freeway). The night of the bust (as I recounted), I was called by a social worker who wanted to place Lorraine (Patty's six-year old daughter) in my home while Patty was in jail. I turned her down for reasons I mentioned earlier.

After talking to me, the social worker called a friend of my mom's, as I said earlier, I'll call her Amber, and Amber agreed to take in Lorraine.

I hadn't known Amber personally while mom was alive, but mom had told me a tiny bit about her along the way. Apparently, mom and Amber both had a habit of taking their kids to the park to play (the photo is of Amber with her children, Susan and Gracie). As they kept running into one another there, they struck up a friendship. Mom said of Amber that she was a single parent and "a good Christian woman with a good heart." I suspect they talked the way friends do, and that Amber sooner or later learned all about my sister, Patty. After they had become *really* good friends, mom said that Amber told her

that if there was ever a problem at the house (like, if mom wasn't around anymore and there was a need there), she (Amber) would step up and be there for mom (in absentia) and the family. It was a promise Amber made to my mother, freely given in good faith and in the spirit of one friend to another.

I met Amber about a week after Patty was jailed (again, this was about a year after mom died). Amber called several times previous to the meeting to introduce herself and to talk generally about Lorraine. Just before the weekend, she asked if I could come out and help her get clothes for Lorraine from the Highland house. There were still renters living in the home and she was wary of them.

My first take upon seeing Amber was that this was a pretty, young woman with a dazzling smile. We got the clothes, then left to see Lorraine, meet Amber's girls and see her home. It was very cordial.

That next weekend, I had to go out and pick up Patty's cats, all of which were stranded at the Highland house (the tenants had been feeding them, but I needed to get them—the three felines are shown in the photo to the left, lounging on the steps in my back bungalow.)

Just before leaving Pasadena to get them, I talked briefly to Amber by phone. She sounded depressed.

After having picked up the cats, I stopped by Ambers to say high to Lorraine. While there, I found out why Amber was so down.

Amber was a California-licensed *day care provider* who ran a *day care center* out of her small home. She had three kids in her care, all from the same family, all having been with her for years and years. This little business was her primary source of income and as such, was the way she was supporting her own family (aside from a small amount she was receiving from Susan's father in child support—Gracie's father was giving her nothing).

Unfortunately, the family from whence came her charges lived just three houses up from mom's place. The parents were well aware of what Patty had been doing with the drugs and all. They knew who Lorraine was

and they knew about the bust.

When they found out that Amber had taken Lorraine in, their paranoia got the best of them and the father gave Amber an ultimatum: Get rid of Lorraine or he would pull his three children out of Amber's care.

His rationale was (according to him) that if there were people in the drug world who wanted to get at Patty through Lorraine, his children might get caught in the crossfire. This was not completely unreasonable thinking, assuming paranoia was a big part of your life, you'd been reading too many crime novels (or watching too much TV) and you believed that Patty was important enough within the drug world to warrant such action (which she wasn't). I had a feeling, though, that there was more going on. In fact, I think the family was having money problems and the dad was looking for an excuse to relieve himself of the monthly outlay.

In any case, Amber's big heart (she felt for Lorraine) coupled with her promise to my mom moved her to refuse the demand and, consequentially, the family removed their children. With that, Amber's entire earned income evaporated in an afternoon . . . and it was all due to her uncommonly kind and stalwart loyalty to my mom.[1]

The story didn't exactly make me mad, but it did rile my sense of justice. I couldn't see Amber being punished financially for doing the good, Christian thing (i.e., taking Lorraine in). I had that huge pile of money dad had left me which was just sitting there in the Smith Barney account—money that, given my frugal ways, was never going to get spent and was probably going to end up in Patty and Lorraine's pockets when I died, anyway, so I figured, *what the hell. I'm not going to let Amber go down the drain financially as a consequence of her kindness*.

Bottom line: I wrote her a $1500 check on the spot. Amber was initially scandalized that I was offering her money and refused to take it, but after a half-hour discussion, necessity and a realization of the pickle she was in finally raised its ugly head and she relented.

This was right in the middle of the school year and the chances of her picking up more day-care kids was nil as everyone who needed service already had it (and if, I suspect, it had been easy to acquire more children, just in general, I think she would have done so long before the blow-up). This was not going to be a short-lived problem.

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[1] She would sooner or later receive a paltry sum from Social Services as a Foster Care Parent, but she wasn't aware of that at the beginning and, in fact, received nothing for the first several months. Also, the sum turned out to be something like $300, which hardly off-set the $1500 she lost when that family pulled their kids.

It didn't take long for me to realize what karma had done, had plopped into my lap a situation in which I might make a deserving soul's life better, but at that point I really didn't have a plan. Still, at the beginning of the second month, I tried to give Amber another $1500. Her Christian values and sense of propriety (not to mention the fact that I was still, more or less, a stranger) motivated her to refuse the check saying, "It's just not right." The next time I saw her, though, she was embarrassed but admitted that she had been foolish to refuse the help, was broke, and accepted the offering.

Throughout the next few months, Amber called regularly to talk primarily about Lorraine. I went out to see Lorraine most weekends, hanging out with Amber and her kids as a side treat. In fact, I really enjoyed being around her kids. Susan was bright with an impish sense of humor, and Gracie, the two-year-old, was cute as a button, a total fireball and someone who was constantly climbing on things. I had never had the chance to spend time with a family that had small children. It was quite a trip. It also gave me an opportunity to be watchful, keeping a lookout for things that needed fixing and ways I might make their lives better.

As I said, I really didn't have a plan yet. It would form, though, over those first few months.

Amber was smart. She was a quick thinker and had a good, analytic mind. What she didn't have was much education. She had graduated from high school but had not gone on to college, always assuming (in somewhat of a throwback to the 1950's and not inconsistent with the fundamentalist Christian upbringing she had had) that after high school she would get married, settle down and have babies. She got married and she did have babies, but her life never settled into the Cinderella world she had envisioned.

By the time I met her, what was important to her were three things: her children, the church and her desire to educate herself so she wouldn't have to depend upon a man to support her family (she had been treated pretty badly by Gracie's father, not to mention most of the other men she had run across in her life).

Moving along that path toward self-reliance, she had enrolled and was all set to start *junior college* in January. She really didn't know where she was going in the process (she didn't have a major in mind), but she was fired up and excited about the prospect of expanding out into this new area. Clearly, having her business go up in flames was a major set-back.

Slowly, the plan began to form: My gift to her for the noble thing she

had done for my mom would be to help her become self-reliant. I would help her get an education.

_____x_____

[And at this point, I'm going to begin to go off-script from the original chapter and provide bits and pieces of important information but not in quite such an in-depth way.]

There was a lot of crashing around over the next six to eight months. During that time of tumult, Amber's mother, who was very religious, gave Amber a very bad time because she didn't understand why this complete stranger was helping her daughter out financially. Her stepfather wasn't at all supportive of the arrangement, either. Amber had pretty much become addicted to talking to me on the phone ever night, primarily because I knew a lot about a lot of things, and because through the Brothers (though I never introduced her to them), I had a view of the world and attitude about life that she found interesting and unlike anything she had ever encountered (as I alluded to above, she had been brought up in a stiflingly fundamentalist Christian household, and in looking back it seems as though it was time for her to wake up in a spiritual sense—I, it would appear, was the individual karma had positioned to do the awakening). Due to her interaction with me, she stopped going to church which prompted church members, with prodding from her mother, to come to her door to try to convince her that she was being tempted by the devil and needed to come back to the church. Lorraine and Susan, being the same age and living in very close proximity (Amber's house was quite small) were becoming more and more at odds, so Lorraine's acting out was escalating (at one point, Lorraine stood out on Amber's front sidewalk and screamed over and over again at the house, "I hate you people. I wish I had never come here." Amber had to call the police to get her to calm down). We even became a couple for a short period of time before it became evident that *that* was a really bad idea (it created all sorts of unexpected problems) and we reverted back to the original plan.

The point is, when I first met Amber, she was calm and thoughtful and, as I've said, very loving toward her children. Her life was simple. She could do simple.

I had nothing to do with her keeping Lorraine when that neighborhood family laid down their ultimatum, so her kindness to my mom (taking

Lorraine in) was a karmic choice that she made on her own. Its repercussions would have happened whether I stepped in or not (though if I hadn't, I'm not sure what she and her family would have done).

If I'd just given her money and walked away, she'd still be a good, kind soul living in her fundamentalist Christian world. But that isn't how it went down and my extended presence in her life, that made things psychologically complicated. Psychological complications were not something she had a history of being able to handle well. Remember that dream?

> I saw myself looking into a mirror, noticing that I had a small cut on my cheek that had been stitched. For some reason, I rubbed the area. The stitch broke lose. Within moments, enormous amounts of blood came gushing out of the wound.
>
> My evaluation was that I had broken wide open and possibly damaged something that had been, before my ministrations, in the process of healing. What it was I didn't know, but that was what I concluded.

Fortunately (thankfully), the "crashing around" didn't last an inordinate amount of time. When things calmed down and life finally migrated back to some sense of normalcy, my commitment to my original goal hadn't flagged. I still intended to get Amber set up so she could support her family "without the help of a man," then cut her loose to have a hopefully good life on her own . . . and that is exactly what I did.

_____x_____

[One more thing . . .]

As I said, it didn't take long for Lorraine's presence in Amber's household to begin to take a toll on everyone. Amber and I talked about the problem several times concluding that, at least to some degree, the difficulty was the consequence of the fact that everyone was so jammed together in the small home Amber had lived in for so many years (Susan and Lorraine were, as I reported earlier, the same age and were not exactly compatible). My solution was to offer Amber and her family the option of moving into mom's five-bedroom house (I had, by that time, removed the renters).

She initially said no. She knew from the start that she was in a fi-

nancial corner, so not accepting financial help from me was not something she could realistically do, but she still had a very strong sense of propriety (probably due to that Christian upbringing) and wasn't happy about any of it. Anything that seemed gratuitous she opposed. In fact, if I wanted to do something for the family that was not absolutely necessary, like a trip to Disneyland, the only way I could convince her to do it was to appeal to how it would affect her kids—she really loved her kids and would do anything for them, even accept a gift she felt uncomfortable with.

Moving into mom's house had very real plusses for the children, but it psychologically put her in an awkward position with me (at least in her mind). I had to go a long way to convince her that this was something she should do for her kids (again), and that I would treat the relationship honorably no matter what (which was a given in my mind but apparently not in hers).

Lorraine's regular melting downs were the final straws. Amber finally relented and said OK to the move.

It took a few months to get everything set up for the re-planting. Ironically, just before the move, Lorraine got REALLY crazy (that was when she planted herself out on the sidewalk in front of Amber's house and began yelling over and over again, "I hate you people. I wish I had never come here."). The consequence, which again, Amber really didn't like but saw no alternative to, was to send Lorraine back to Social Services. To keep from hurting her feelings, Amber told her the move was necessary so she could "be closer to Patty so Patty could see her more often."[2] With that, Lorraine was transferred to a woman living in South Pasadena who did wonders with her. It was a good move. I was happy it happened.

At that point, though, Amber was in motion getting ready to move into mom's house. I had repainted it and re-carpeted it. She had informed her landlord and had moving boxes packed. Going back on the deal seemed a bad idea, especially given my commitment to keeping her engaged and moving on the education front. So about a month after Lorraine left, Am-

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[2] Note: Several weeks after the bust (in fact, it was the day after Christmas), Patty was released from jail. I picked her up out in Highland and brought her to Pasadena, letting her stay in the back bungalow. There was a snafu at the Social Services office—Lorraine's social worker had gone on vacation—so nobody kept track of Patty and Lorraine. The consequence was that Patty had pretty much full access to Lorraine almost immediately (this is not standard practice in situations like this). What's more, Amber was perfectly amenable to the prospective of Patty going out to see Lorraine, so Patty did it often. The obvious problem was that Highland was an hour from Pasadena, one way, so travel was becoming onerous.

ber and her small family moved into mom's house.

_____x_____

[The plan . . .]

As I said, once the crashing ended, I still felt strongly about helping Amber and her family succeed, so the plan, simply, was to help her do that. Knowing that going to school, working a job and taking care of her now three-year old daughter all at once was going to be overwhelming (though I have to say I am amazed at all the women "out there" who have done just that), the solution seemed simple and obvious. As time proceeded, I would continue to give her money for bills and living expenses; I would continue to pay for the house's monthly mortgage and upkeep; I would continue to let the family stay in mom's house rent free; I would provide money for Amber's tuition and books and incidentals (like a computer); I would continue to do things for the family that made life both livable and fun (when possible). In doing all that, I would be giving her the opportunity to educate herself without the weight and worry of financial solvency hanging over her head.

That obligation was, to my mind, set in stone, which harkens me back to that second dream, the one that was had by Amber (and recounted to me after-the-fact).

> She found herself dumping an enormous amount of concrete on top of me while I was standing in a pit. The concrete was hardening fast. She was horrified at what she had done, but as I began to crawl up out of the muck, another acquaintance came and smacked me with a shovel, beating me back down into the slurry. As it was happening, the assailant was saying, "Boy, this guy (meaning me) is tough."
>
> My evaluation was that I was now stuck in a situation from which I would not be allowed to extricate myself.

What was good about the *after-crash* period, aside from the fact that I was doing exactly what I wanted to do after seeing that *20/20* story, was that I was finally moving back to being what I think karma had in mind for me all along, a dispassionate supporter (a distinction that was blurred

during the short period we were a couple) and sometimes teacher to this very deserving human Being. And with that, we have that last dream:

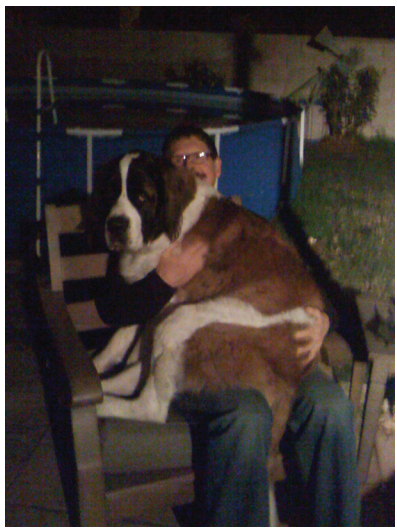
> I was in a kitchen. There was a steel counter under which existed what looked like a sink-well in the floor (an odd place for a sink, but that's where it was). At the bottom of the sink was a drain. The dream began with my pouring water into the drain, then turning to leave. As I approached the door, someone in the kitchen said, "Oh, oh. Water's backing up." I turned to see the sink full of murky, standing water. I went back, got down on my hands and knees and put my hands into the brew. In doing so, I pulled out a thick, gloppy chunk of debris. With the removal of the offending mass, the water poured out the way it should.
>
> My evaluation of the dream was that I was currently in a situation of my own making that was blocked up, and that I had or was about to undo the blockage allowing the situation to flow naturally.

I don't have premonitory dreams often, but when I do, they really do scream at me . . .

_____x_____

[And by the by . . .]

I should also add that along the way as the plan unfolded, I had the pleasure of making life for Amber and her family a whole lot more pleasant than it otherwise would have been. For Christmas one year, I got Gracie a Power Wheels Jeep Wrangler she could drive around (that's it strapped to the top of my car before being driven out to Highland on Christmas eve). I provided Amber with reliable transportation in the form a Honda Pilot. I took the family to San Diego one summer to stay for a week at the beach (we went to the zoo and everything—it was a huge hit with the kids). We went to Disneyland sev-



eral times. And then there was Sully, the St. Bernard I got the family (named after the character in Monster's Inc).

Sully was a love, as you can see from the photos. The first photo is of him as a puppy, sitting on my lap in the Boxter as we were taking him to the Highland house from the breeders (you can just see the tip of my nose to the left on the upper edge of the picture).

The next photo is of him full grown sitting next to me (notice the size of his head compared to the size of my head). And the last photo is of him, all 160-pound worth, *sitting in my lap*—a stunt he would execute *completely on his own* every chance he got.[3]

I did love that dog.

_____x_____

[From here on, I'm going to fill you in using a series of notes I made throughout the twelve or thirteen years I was associated with Amber and her family. They will do a fairly good job of giving you a feel for some of the ups-and-down that we experienced as she proceeded upon the rest of her path (with me playing support in the back-

[3] Not to make too big a deal of it, but Wigman, Patty's hundred-pound Australian Shepherd, used to attempt to do this very same thing with me, also. There is something quite funny about watching a behemoth of a dog trying to figure out how he can surreptitiously maneuver himself onto your lap, presumably (in the dog's mind) without your noticing. Very endearing, but absolutely hysterical!

ground). This is definitely piecemeal, but it'll do.]

It is now 2012 and the saga of Amber has continued in a worthwhile way. It took a few years for Amber to get her feet under her in an academic sense. As I said, she is bright, but not having been in an academic setting for over fourteen years (and having been someone who skated by when last *in* an academic setting—she was evidently quite adept at being truant, then arriving out of the blue and acing whatever tests she needed to take), going back to school was not easy. So although she knew what her final destination was to be (i.e., a place where she could support herself and her little ones without the presence of a man), getting there was not a cakewalk.

After a year or so of taking remedial classes, she decided to acquire the prerequisites needed to get into a Radiation Technology program at her local junior college. She earned the needed units over a year or two of course work, but unfortunately the program she was trying to get into was tiny and the first year she applied, she was turned down. It wasn't for lack of grades—she was doing quite well. The problem was that because the program was small, it had a large backlog of students who had applied in previous years and had themselves been turned down. The year she applied, the administrators of the program decided to take only "returning candidates."

At the time, this was a huge blow to both of us. She had her heart set on "getting on with it," and I was spending $2500 to $3500 more than I was making in a given month on both her, her family and, just to add extra zest to my life, Patty. Having my timetable blown was hard.

Note: With mom's house in her Trust and not in my name, I was unable to take any tax break for paying its mortgage (as Amber was paying no rent, the only financial plus I might gain from keeping the house *was* a tax break). To remedy this, in 2011 I bought the house from the Trust (this is where part of dad's money went). To do that, I had to take over the mortgage, which I'd been paying out for several years in any case, and I had to put Patty and Lorraine's share of the proceeds aside for them. Lorraine's share was put in a special account I had with my broker, and Patty's share was used to pay off her bad debts (these were around $25,000 when I started) with the remainder being put into a fund from which she could draw from when needed.

Moving on: Patty wanted Lorraine back, but Social Services said she needed a job and a living space in which Lorraine could have her own room. Patty's solution was to move out of my place and take up residence in the mobile home mom had bought in Bullhead City, across the river from Laughlin, Nevada (this was one of the abodes mom bought and lived in in the hopes of helping Patty find a job in the area—she was never able to sell the place, so she just kept it). In fact, Patty was within a week of getting Lorraine back when, while visiting, Lorraine got snarky and Patty swatted her bottom. Lorraine got catty and told the social worker that Patty hit her. The social worker told the judge, which she had to do, and that was the end of Patty's bid to get Lorraine back.[4]

ONCE AGAIN, it's interesting how karma works, because this, for me, was a Godsend. I couldn't very well release Patty to her own devices if she had Lorraine in tow. Now, without Lorraine, Patty was where she belonged, which is to say, *on her own*. In any case, Patty hadn't had a job in the last two years so she has been drawing on the funds I had for her. They are now exhausted. At this point, I'm pretty sure she has finally gotten a job (hallelujah, brother!) as I haven't heard from her for money in the last two months . . .

(Shit! It's 2013, Patty has no job and I am now giving her, gratis, $500 a month. Life could be worse, though. She could be living with me.)

Back at the ranch: As is often the case when karma deals what appears to be a blow, Amber's setback with the Radiation Tech opportunity turned out to be a good thing. There are, what, four to ten X-Ray Techs in any given hospital at any a given time, whereas there are hundreds of Registered Nurses. The smart thing for her to do, from an employment perspective, would be to get a degree in *nursing*.

In the beginning of 2013, she had enough units for two AA degrees from her local college. All she'd need was one more semester of final prerequisites (it actually took two semesters, but who's counting) to gain en-

[4] Remember I said I didn't take Lorraine in after Patty's bust because I didn't trust that she might not do something spooky to get back at me if she ever didn't get her way on some point of order, and that she had done something pretty petty to Patty "later on" that more or less verified that fear? Well, this was it. Patty smacked her on the bottom for being a twit (something that didn't hurt her a bit, and for which I'm quite sure she deserved no matter what the "let children be children" crowd says), and she tattled to the social worker (who was legally bound to tell the judge) *just to get back at Patty*. The consequence, which I'm sure she didn't see coming, was that the judge refused to let Lorraine return to Patty's care.

trance into a nursing program either at Loma Linda University or Cal State Redlands. It would then take three years for her to get through the nursing program. By the time she'd graduate (assuming all went as planned—knock on wood), I'd have gone through most of the inheritance from my dad (not all of the money has gone to her, but enough . . .).

The point is that in three years, either Amber will be ready to take over her life and become "a productive member of society," or she and her family will end up living out of a car because I will be pretty close to out of cash.

(At the time of this writing, all I could say was, "We'll see. Let's Hope!")

And as a final, amused aside, at that point, I practically never spoke to Amber on the phone anymore. The reason for that is another karmic twist the explanation of which will be presented a few chapters down the line. Keep reading. We aren't done yet!

Addendum 1: About two years after Lorraine left Amber's home, she was adopted by another woman who lived in Long Beach. Lorraine is now, apparently, doing very well.

Addendum 2: It's January, 2015: Amber is now in her second year at Loma Linda University, School of Nursing, just having passed the nastiest of classes, Pharmacology—the course that weeds out the weaklings from the mighty. She has been on the Dean's List twice. In short, she's halfway through and going strong. I knew she was a smart young lady when I met her. She is indeed! I am very proud of her. Also, being associated with Loma Linda has had added benefits. Because they are a Seventh-day Adventists school and, hence, vegetarian, she has changed her diet considerably (apparently you can't even find salt in their cafeteria), has lost weight and is now living a considerably more healthy life. All is good . . .

Addendum 3: It's August, 2015: I don't hear from Patty much, which is good, but at this point I believe she has been with the same guy for at least a few years. I'm still giving her the $500 a month. She occasionally contacts me, but when she does I am usually very matter-of-fact and to the point and not at all welcoming. It really tugs at my heart when I do this. I have so much and she has so little. She is a good-hearted soul, but there is a certain amount of chaos that comes with her presence. I'd like to think

I am together enough to deal with it, but my child-self says *no*. The real problem is that I'm fairly sure that if I gave her an opening, she would invite herself to come live here. That just isn't something I want to have happen, especially given the people she seems to accumulate around her (and the dumpster diving and trolling the neighborhood, looking in refuse bins for bottles and cans to turn in for money—not something I want to deal with).[5]

Addendum 4: It's July, 2018 (five years past the 2013 entry that said, "Just three more years till Amber's done and I'm out from under!"): Amber graduated from Loma Linda University as an RN about a year ago. She had all sorts of problems getting her date to take the California Nursing Certification Test as the state had lost some of her records. All sorts of maneuvering had to be done to convince the Board of Nurses that she was worthy, but she finally succeeded and she got to take the test. She passed with flying colors.

The big deal for young nurses is to go into the ER (emergency room) or ICU (intensive care unit), mainly because anyone who can survive those setting for a few years can go anywhere "in later life." Amber's problem was that she wasn't young, she was in her forties, so she wisely decided she would forego the ambition-think and go for her heart's desire, Labor and Delivery (she loves babies).

Lo and behold, with only 3 being selected out of 300 applicants, she got a Residency position in Loma Linda Hospital's *Labor and Delivery department*. She has been on cloud-nine ever since.

Within a week of my writing this, she will have been there 90 days, which means she will become a fully independent, full-fledged, Labor and Delivery nurse at a major university hospital . . . and someone who can now independently support her family on her own.

She is now, in short, exactly where she has always wanted to be . . .

[5] In fact, at some time around 2018, I did invite Patty to come live at my house, with restrictions. She chose to pass on the offer . . .

Linkage Between Volumes

There is a dog that lives next door that barks fairly regularly. It isn't the "woof, woof, woof," then ten seconds of silence, then "woof, woof, woof" kind of barking you hear when a dog is lonesome and is calling out into the wilderness hoping that someone will notice. It is the high pitched, sharp yapping of a small animal that styles itself a watch dog that isn't going to let the slightest bit of activity out on the street pass without comment.

The dog's name is Felicia, and her owned, my neighbor, is Julie, owner of Juilianne's Restaurant down in San Marino. Julie is a wonderful neighbor. She is thoughtful, has a great eye for style (her house and yard are a wonder) and is a very pleasant person to be around. I don't begrudge her her dog, and until now, I've more or less put up with the barking. But it's summertime, I'm on summer break and home all day, and of late it's been getting on my nerves.

Things don't usually bother me unless there is something in the experience for me to see. More often than not, it takes meditation for me to pry loose that something. This was no different.

When I looked, the first thing I noticed was that very little time during the day is taken up with barking. I have neither enjoyed those long periods of quiet nor have I been grateful for the peacefulness that has existed in those acres of time between outbursts. That was enlightening, but it wasn't the key.

The next thing that presented itself was the observation that the dog was just doing her duty, as she knew it, and that from her perspective, it was what made her life worthwhile. How could I possibly be angry at that? Interesting again, but not the key.

As the meditation progressed, I could see that Julie was blissfully unaware of the irritation I was feeling due to a situation that she was ultimately responsible for (it *was* her dog). So I spent some time looking for all the ways *I* might be oblivious to things *I* was doing that might be making life miserable for others. Again, an interesting train of thought,

but not the nugget.

The key, it turned out, was the observation that there has been very little in my life that hasn't gone smoothly, and that when things haven't been smooth, I've responded to the dissonance with my child-self becoming irritated. This probably sounds preposterous. Most everyone responds with irritation when things don't go their way. Still, why I found this interesting for me was two-fold.

First, my child-self had held this tendency so close to itself (which is to say, *I* had held this tendency so close to *myself*) that I didn't realize it was even there (*know thyself?*). It was almost as though it was invisible, showing itself only at specific times, then retreating back into the shadows. If I had been more aware of its presence, I'd have had a better chance of doing something about it long ago (interesting how the child protects its little peccadillos).

Second, what I think karma wanted me to see was that, with the exception of some really, really trivial (in a cosmic sense) bumps . . . like a yapping dog, my life has proceeded in a relatively unimpeded way. I have had a few roadblocks provided by the standard karmic knots and challenges that are the wont of every human at this time, but on the whole, life has been very gentle with me . . . all of which got me thinking. Why has my life been so comfortable, so protected?

I've always known that I would not be a historical figure this time around. Yes, some people in the world of physics education know my name due to the physics text I wrote, but not millions and certainly not for my book on eastern philosophy, which is far and away more important to me than my little bit of work in *physics education*. And although I've been given so much through my contact with the Brothers, I know I am not really a spokesman for them.

So what's the deal?

It may have to do with the writing of this book. Because even though the book may be read by only a handful of people (mainly, I suppose, people I have come into contact with through my connection to Poly), just maybe that handful are people who are meant to have contact with the Brothers through this unusual way . . . maybe . . .

In any case, you've read the first volume. In it, you've learned a bit about my early life and some Poly history (none of which was the main point of the book, but still, hopefully, entertaining). More importantly (and in no particular order), you now understand how my mom's little problem redirected my life; you've met Kay and the Brothers; you've been

given a bit of background as to what the Brothers have said is really going on here, underneath the hood (so to speak); you've been introduced to the idea of chelahood and gotten to know some chelas; you've met Blavasky and some of the early Theosophists; you've spent time thinking about the understructure of thought, and about death and the inner worlds; you've seen in real-time how karma has affected my world at certain points in my life; you've gotten to know a bit about my compatriots; you've learned about the Dark Brothers; you've been introduced to the Kali Yuga and you've had a chance to see how I have used what I've learned from the Brother to deal with life.

It has all been a free read. Nothing has been asked of you. There is no place to sign up once done. What you've been given is yours to think about and do with as you will (though I haven't really given you anything other than a mindset—knowing about how *thought-forms* work is fun, for instance, but it isn't as though you will, in all probability, have the focus required to be able to move *dynamic thought* in a way that will materially affect your world, at least not if you are like me . . . and thank God for that). You've now read, in short and in my opinion, the most important part of the book, Volume 1.

But there is still over 500 pages more in Volume 2 . . . so what's that all about?

I haven't said all I want to say about our younger brothers in the animal kingdom.

I haven't yet made the case for my presence as a quiet but unfortunate *herald* (you are going to find this interesting if not a bit unsettling).

I haven't explained why, in the context of the E.Phil class I taught for so long, the ancient admonition that "the teacher must die" (in a metaphorical sense) is relevant, and how clever karma was in contriving that death for me (this having to do with another girlfriend).

I haven't spoken to why I was banned from teaching AP Physics at Poly for ten years (all of which is couched in a discussion of how the child-self reacts to situations it thinks is unfair and uncontrollable).

I haven't said much about my friends and colleagues at Poly.

I haven't said much about the planet and global warming.

There are *two chapters* devoted to "pranks and amusements I have known" (which in some cases are a hoot) that you haven't yet read.

There are *four chapters* and approximately 240 pages of lab-cover artwork that you haven't yet looked at (some of which is spectacular in the

department of artistic endeavor, some of which is very clever in the department of wordplay, some of which is good clean fun and some of which is just a little bit naughty).

And then there are those six chapters of "stuff that didn't fit in anywhere else" culminating in *the parting shot*.

In a nutshell, there is still more to frolic with. Some of it is related to the Brothers, some not, but it's all (again, in my opinion) interesting. I hope you will take the time to enjoy the rest of the read.

If you are in possession of this book, it is likely you know who Craig Fletcher was. In the unlikely event that isn't the case, you may just be in for a treat. Briefly, although he did write *Physics With Calculus*, a 1300-page, C-level AP Physics text, that is immaterial for our purposes here and, let's face, just a wee bit of a jarring disconnect to what you are about to barge into. He never won awards (not a PEN, a Nobel in Literature, a Pulitzer, a Booker, a Hugo or a MacArthur). He never had an article published in *The Smithsonian*, *The New York Times*, *National Geographic*, *Time* magazine, *The Rolling Stone*, *Mother Jones*, *The Economist* or *National Review*. He was in no honorary societies. He was, in short, about as nondescript an individual as you will ever not know . . . unless you are one of the *several thousand* students who passed through one of his AP or Honors physics classes during the forty-six years he taught at the secondary level or, *more significantly*, was one of the *thousand* or so students who took his *seniors-only* Eastern philosophy activity. From them, there was a singular demand—write an autobiography. Why? The reigning bet was that there was something really, really interesting going on underneath the surface of this man. Turns out they were right (as in, *really* right . . . and no, I'm not just being hyperbolic here, I mean REALLY right) . . .

Read the book. You'll see.

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